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WORD BALLOONS

Like a Phoenix, From the Ashes

As we were saying, welcome aboard. Or rather that's what Bob Greenberger, Founding Editor of COMICS SCENE, was saying a while back in this very same space. That was issue #11, some four years ago. Then, the magazine went into storage, the limbo of long-lost periodicals. Bob Greenberger went off to become a DC Comics Editor. Other contributors got industry jobs or pursued various journalistic careers.

Time passed (as it always does). But, now, COMICS SCENE is back, with a vengeance, armed to the teeth and ready to party. Just like an Arnold Schwarzenegger movie.

That's our emphasis, you see, the screen and the scene. Why? Well, since COMICS SCENE last appeared on newsstands, there have been a small army (OK, maybe a pretty big commando squad) of other comics-type magazines storming the ramparts. Not all of them have survived.

Nevertheless, COMICS SCENE is ready for active duty again. And our goal is to be *different* from the field's other publications. How? Glad you asked. By stressing our twin strengths: coverage of 1) the hottest comics and their talented creators (as COMICS SCENE *always* did) and 2) the latest behind-the-scenes news and views of the increasing number of comics TV/film adaptation attempts (as our sister magazine STARLOG does with science fiction & fantasy). This is what we do best, *why* there's a COMICS SCENE.

If you like what we've done and want to see more than this *one-issue* revival, please let us know. Write Assistant Publisher Milburn Smith at O'Quinn Studios, 475 Park Avenue South, 8th Flr, NY, NY 10016. Tell *him* how much you would like to see COMICS SCENE back in action. Every month or so. Believe us, we really want to see that happen, too.

Meanwhile, for this COMICS SCENE special, we're joined by a number of veteran contributors to the original magazine's run--notably Patrick Daniel O'Neill (its Managing Editor), Will Murray and Kim Howard Johnson, all of whom have written extensively on comics and the media here and elsewhere. Also adding their expertise are STARLOG's Dan Dickholtz & David Hutchison and STARLOG correspondents Steve Swires, Lee Goldberg, Bill Rabkin, Marc Shapiro & Ed Gross--as well as *Cinefantastique*'s Dan Scapperotti, comics researcher/historian Peter Sanderson, former Marvel editorial staffer Jim Massara, *Amazing Heroes*' Andy Mangels and *Home Viewer*'s Clifford Meth.

Together, we've collected a stellar line-up of comics creators and creations, but then you already knew that or you wouldn't have bought this issue or be reading these balloons. So, turn to page six and then read onward . . . about Chris Reeve's newest flight as Superman . . . Chris Claremont's and Louise Simonson's X-plans . . . and of course, Arnold Schwarzenegger's potential comics movie roles.

In the meantime, to cite those immortal words of that selfsame Schwarzenegger: We'll be back.

Well . . . maybe. It depends on you.

—David McDonnell & Carr D'Angelo, Editors

Art: Mike Fisher
Batman Art: Copyright 1987 & Trademark DC Comics Inc.

John Byrne

New Tomorrows for the Man of Steel

The superstar writer/artist considers his Superman streamlining a year later & plans to re-introduce Braniac & Lori Lemaris into the Last Son of Krypton's revised legend.

By PATRICK DANIEL O'NEILL

Superman Art: Copyright 1987 & Trademark DC Comics Inc.

Just as Superman received an all-new history, so does the planet he came from as *The World of Krypton* gets its own mini-series.

Art: John Byrne/Walt Simonson

Superman is my favorite character," says John Byrne. Since picking up the assignment to redefine the classic caped hero for the 1980s and beyond last year, Byrne has come to understand how much the character means to himself and the world at large. "There's no denying that writing and drawing *Superman* now is wish-fulfillment. It even reflects itself in things as subtle as the way I have him fly. Whenever I think about flying, I always get this strange 'tugging' sensation in my chest, so I always have Superman 'fly from the chest,' because that's how I would fly.

"Superman is a very primal character, obviously. He's the granddaddy of all the superheroes. Everybody else descends from Superman."

With last summer's six-issue *Man of Steel* mini-series, Byrne presented a revised version of the familiar tale of Krypton's last son—a story that eliminated some long-standing parts of the legend, and changed others dramatically. Although he had hankered after the assignment for years, Byrne admits taking on Superman was, initially, a daunting project.

"I'm much more comfortable with the character now than a year ago," he says. "The intent was to make him more accessible and more human, and I've done that for myself, at least. I don't worry quite so much whether Superman would say or do this, because it's reaching the point where I can go by feel. I know how this guy thinks, how he acts and reacts. That has been the biggest change, the growing sense of comfort with the character."

Byrne was born in England, and spent his formative years there, before moving with his family to Canada. In fact, he was still in England when he first encountered Superman, at age seven, in the person of George Reeves in the *Adventures of Superman* TV series.

"It's possible that coming from England and Canada allows me a little cleaner view of the icon; possibly I'm able to see the barnacles for what they are," Byrne notes. "Perhaps, what I'm bringing to Superman is the alien view."

In preparing to take over the Superman titles, Byrne went back to the very beginnings of the character's history. "I read mostly the really old stuff, the first 10 years," he says. "I was very aware that, whatever happened in 1938, it was so successful that there was a Superman day at the World's Fair in 1939. That's how fast it clicked. There must have been something way back then that was magic, and that formed the core of what I was trying to do. I asked, 'What came after 1938?' And all the additional 'Supers' and the emphasis on Krypton came after—much after—1938. So, when I was doing my research, that was the direction I was pointed—strip it down."

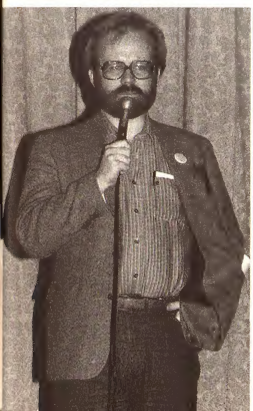
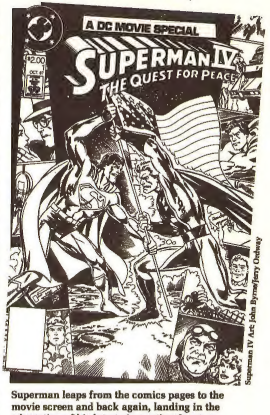


Photo: Deborah Upton

"There's no denying that writing and drawing *Superman* now is wish-fulfillment," admits re-creator John Byrne.



Superman leaps from the comics pages to the movie screen and back again, landing in the adaptation of his latest cinematic adventure.

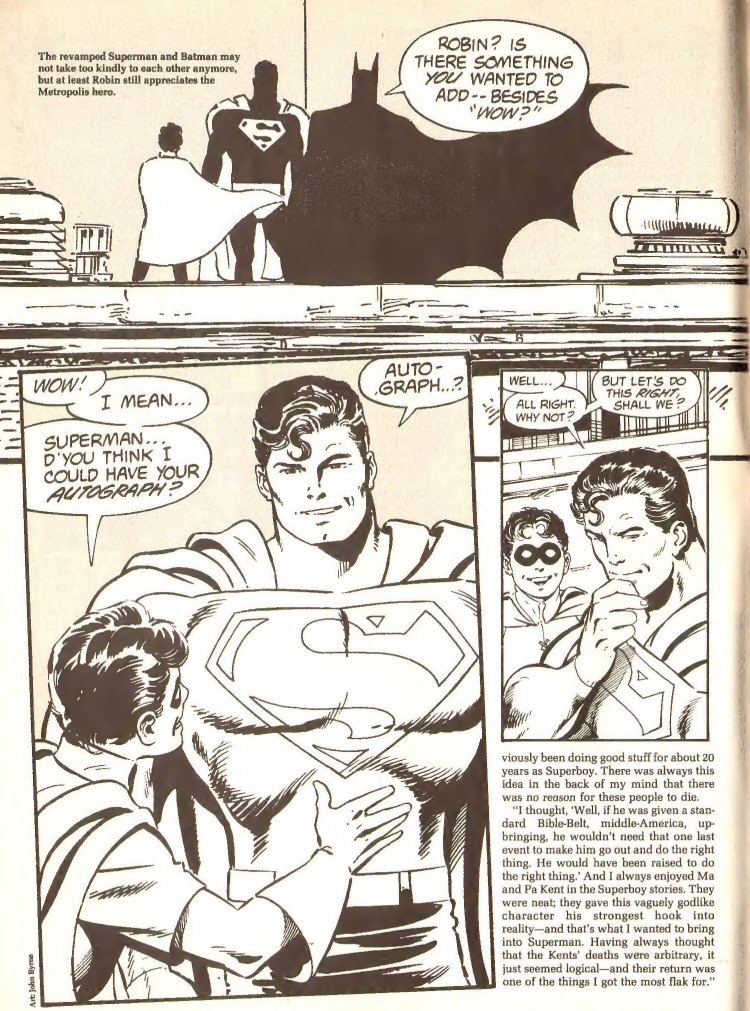
Twelve months after his first issues of *Superman*, Byrne says he's pleased with the reaction to his work. "The feedback from professionals seems to be mostly positive; from the readers, it's either positive or negative, with very little in between," he reveals. "Fortunately, the positive seems to be outweighing the negative by a 10-to-one margin or better. The readers are mostly happy with the restoration of the character's uniqueness—which was my major thrust. The stripping away of the barnacles—the additonal super characters, the 425 billion survivors of Krypton. I think the fans in general like it now—that Superman is again the *sole* survivor of the doomed planet Krypton. I thought that was always what made him strongest when he was first introduced—nobody else can do what he can. No dogs, no monkeys, no horses.

"The negative reaction comes from those who are the strongest purists in regard to the last-seen version of the myth," Byrne notes. "There are some people out there for whom Superman is not Superman unless there is a Krypto or a Supergirl. People for whom Kandor is vital to the myth, people for whom the death of Ma and Pa Kent makes Superman what he is. You don't find all those things in one person, which is interesting. One person thinks Krypto is absolutely vital, but he doesn't mind the Kents being alive and the Phantom Zone being gone. Or somebody else thinks Kandor is important, but doesn't mind the other changes. Everybody has their favorite bit and that's the bit I got rid of."

Since Byrne's earliest memories of the Man of Steel are from the TV series, and since he's familar with the character's other media incarnations, he wanted to combine all those various adaptations of the legend.

"I've tried to take the best parts of all the different versions of Superman—movies, television, the cartoons, and all the published versions," he comments. "My concentration on the TV series turns up mostly in the personification of Clark Kent. I always liked George Reeves' Clark Kent—he was gutsy and nonnonsense. On the TV series, they never apologized for the fact that this guy doesn't turn into another person when he puts the glasses on. They weren't as worried about establishing a wildly different personality for him, or setting up all the traditional comic book cover-ups for why nobody spots him as Superman. If anything came from the show, it's that—the stronger Clark Kent character."

The very first Superman story ever published, in *Action Comics* #1, includes the deaths of the Kryptonian's foster parents, Jonathan and Martha Kent. In perhaps his only divergence from that essential myth, Byrne has left the Kents alive. Why? "I always thought the death of Ma and Pa Kent became terribly arbitrary from the moment the Superboy character was introduced," Byrne explains. "The whole point of their deaths was Pa Kent's deathbed scene, where he says, 'Son, go out and do good stuff.' Not knowing the history of comics as a child, I could never understand why we got that flashback all the time, when Clark had ob-


ROBIN? IS THERE SOMETHING YOU WANTED TO ADD -- BESIDES "WOW?"
WOW!
I MEAN...
SUPERMAN... D'YOU THINK I COULD HAVE YOUR AUTOGRAPH?
AUTO-GRAPH...?
WELL...
ALL RIGHT. WHY NOT?
BUT LET'S DO THIS RIGHT. SHALL WE?

The revamped Superman and Batman may not take too kindly to each other anymore, but at least Robin still appreciates the Metropolis hero.

Art: John Byrne

viously been doing good stuff for about 20 years as Superboy. There was always this idea in the back of my mind that there was *no reason* for these people to die.

"I thought, 'Well, if he was given a standard Bible-Belt, middle-America, upbringing, he wouldn't need that one last event to make him go out and do the right thing. He would have been raised to do the right thing.' And I always enjoyed Ma and Pa Kent in the Superboy stories. They were neat; they gave this vaguely godlike character his strongest hook into reality—and that's what I wanted to bring into Superman. Having always thought that the Kents' deaths were arbitrary, it just seemed logical—and their return was one of the things I got the most flak for."

Though Superman began a year ago, under Byrne's creative direction, with a clean slate, the artist/writer has been bringing back a number of the characters and concepts from earlier years—including Bizarro, Metallo and Titano the giant ape. He isn't done yet.

"Superman is now at roughly the same point in his career that he was before the creative switch," Byrne notes. "As long as I stay on the book, I'm going to keep pulling in, periodically, some of the older stuff. We're dealing with a new audience, and there are things out of the old Superman run that I think can be reinjected without being drastically altered or altering what we're trying to do here.

"As an example, I'm going to be reintroducing Lori Lemaris—Superman's mermaid ex-girl friend—she died during the Crisis and I'm going to leave her dead—but I'm going to re-establish that she *was* someone in this Superman's past, just as she was in the past of the previous Superman."

That last phrase is one that annoys Byrne. "I hate myself every time I say, 'the previous Superman,' because it is supposed to be the same guy. This isn't Superman 3, this is the same guy who went through Crisis. That's one reason I bring in the old stuff: to create the occasionally subliminal—and sometimes heavy-handed—reminder that this is *not* another character."

A year ago, Byrne took over the *Superman* title, which began anew with issue #1, and *Action Comics*, revamped as a Superman team-up title. At the same time, Marv Wolfman and Jerry Ordway became the writer-artist team on *Adventures of Superman*, continuing the numbering from the original *Superman* title. Now, Byrne reports, Wolfman will be leaving that book; in his place, Byrne will do springboards with someone else writing dialogue.

"The first thing I'm doing on *Adventures* with Jerry Ordway is bringing back Brainiac—re-*creating* Brainiac, I should say, because he won't be exactly the same person," Byrne notes. Asked if this Brainiac will look like a green android or the later more robotic character, he replies, "All of the above. He'll start as a humanoid alien, so he can be the actual ancestor of Braniac 5 [of the Legion of Super-Heroes]—that way, we won't have to do a story in five years explaining him—then he'll get himself computerized. The computerization will take over, so he becomes a living computer.

"There's an extra twist I've tossed in," Byrne continues. "There's one thing that has always bothered me about Brainiac, ever since I grew up and stopped mispronouncing his name as 'Branak'—Brainiac is a *silly* name. I've come up with an explanation for it, which involves a circus performer who uses the name Brainiac and gets caught up with the alien Querl Dox, or whatever his name is. Querl Dox adopts the Brainiac name."

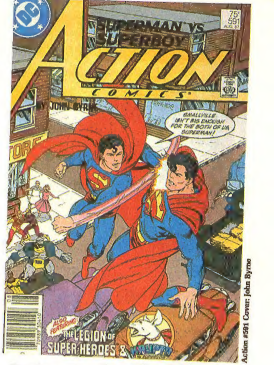
Byrne says his influences are many and widely disparate, though one frequently cited influence is in error. "It's a popular misconception that I was influenced in my early days by Japanese animation," he says. "But I didn't see any Japanese animation until my second San Diego Convention, when I was 27 years old, and in the business for about four years. I don't know exactly where that simplistic style I had in the early days came from, but it *wasn't* Japanese animation. I keep seeing it in articles about me—'the heavy Japanese animation influence.' Oh really? Comes as a shock to me.

"The biggest influence, really—the one I still see the strongest—is somebody 90 percent of American readers have never heard of: a British cartoonist, Giles, who works for the *Daily Express*. From him, I got my sense of what Jerry Ordway calls 'texturing,' the fact that everything must have a sense of surface to it—and a lot of busyness in the background.

"The first major influence after I broke into the business was Neal Adams, and the biggest thing since then is trying *not* to be Neal," Byrne continues. "Poor Neal is wandering around like a disease as we all try to get over being Neal Adams. And there's a whole generation of artists coming up who, in 10 years, will be trying to get over being Frank Miller. And there are even one or two John Byrnes out there, which scares me—because they're all doing my *old* stuff. 'Whoa—this guy is doing Space: 1999 here!'

"My influences are many and varied, and it happens so much that, even today, if I see something I like, I will, by osmosis, suck into my work whatever it is I like. When Frank Miller came along, doing his moody, *Dark Shadows* stuff, with lots of

(continued on page 64)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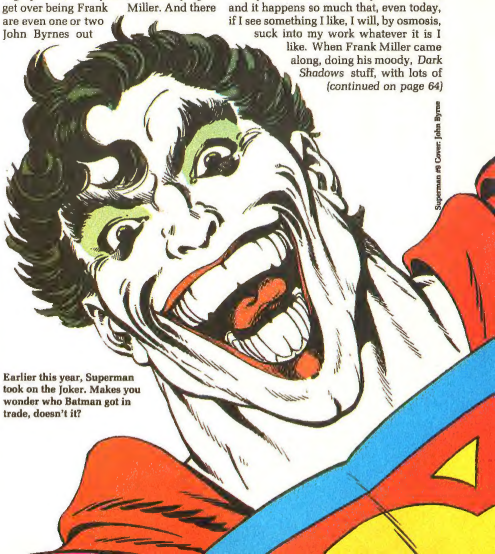
SUPERMAN VS. SUPERBOY
ACTION COMICS
JOHN BYRNE
REALLY?! WHY DID I EVER FIGHT FOR THE RIGHT OF AN IMPOSTER?!
THE LEGION OF SUPER-HEROES

Action #591 Cover: John Byrne

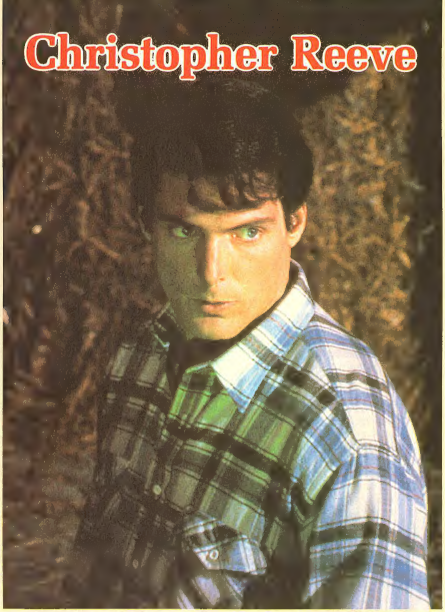
Superboy was one element discarded in Superman's revamping . . . and the Teen of Steel wasn't very happy about it either.



Superman #5 Cover: John Byrne

Earlier this year, Superman took on the Joker. Makes you wonder who Batman got in trade, doesn't it?

Christopher Reeve



All Superman IV Photos: Copyright 1987 Cannon Films Inc. & Warner Bros. Inc.

With all his ties to Krypton severed, Christopher Reeve explains, Kal-El is now a son of Earth.

It's a Bird, It's a Plane, It's "Superman IV"

By CARR D'ANGELO

The talented actor flies again, taking control of Earth's fate & commenting on the role of superheroes in today's world.

The Superman legend has been so stripped down during the last year that the Man of Steel should consider himself lucky to still have a cape on his back. Independent of John Byrne's elimination of excess from the Superman comics, Christopher Reeve has streamlined the hero further for his return in this summer's film adventure, *Superman IV*.

"*Superman IV* emphasizes Superman as a citizen of the planet Earth," Reeve states. "All his ties to Krypton are now cut. Ma and Pa Kent are dead—even his farm in Kansas is up for sale. Superman is *not* very different from us and this time, we try to stress those similarities."

Like many other citizens of Earth, Superman becomes concerned about the stockpiling of nuclear arms by the planet's divided nations. Unlike other pro-peace demonstrators, however, Superman can take matters into his own hands—and he does by deciding to destroy the world's nuclear weapons. Breaking his Kryptonian pledge of non-interference yet again, the Man of Steel has become even closer to humanity.

"Superman interferes in the nuclear arms race only after a great deal of soul-searching at the request of a 12-year-old boy. It wasn't Superman's idea to start with," Reeve explains. "Superman does realize he has made a mistake and makes a speech at the movie's end saying: 'I thought I could give you all the gift of freedom from war, but I was wrong. It's not mine to give.'

"One of our points is that Superman is trying to tell the people of the world, 'If you would just look at the world as Smallville, if you realize you're all living in a global village, everything would be different.'

"There are people from other planets out there who want to meet us and share with us, but they don't feel we're ready yet. That's my personal view. I believe there are citizens of other planets waiting for us to catch up to them in evolution before they're ready to discuss things with us. Whether they come from the Pleiades or wherever, they're maybe millions of years down the line in evolution and waiting for us to catch up. And the first thing we will have to give up as Earth people is this nonsense of fighting each other all the time over. . . whatever the issues are."

Reeve only returned to the Superman series following the disappointing *Superman III* because he was guaranteed more creative control over the Metropolis Marvel's flight path. Developing the story for *Superman IV* with screenwriters Larry Konner and Mark Rosenthal (STARLOG #109), the actor decided the latest Superman movie should impart some important ideas to the audience. "You can communicate with a mass audience in many ways," Reeve says. "It's not that we're saying something that couldn't be said somewhere else, but when people are watching an entertainment, their guards are down, they don't expect to be lectured. And sometimes, when people aren't on the offensive about being preached at, you can sneak some ideas in that will go straight to the center of the brain and stay there.

"Hearing about the global village concept from Superman is easier to listen to and has a very romantic feeling. People will be more moved hearing this message in a movie than by listening to a politician say it. I just hope *Superman IV* makes a worthwhile contribution."

To illustrate the soul-searching Superman goes through before making his major decision, Reeve contributed an idea for a scene that wasn't in the original script. In a breathtaking around-the-globe

The Man of Steel's latest film feats range from maintaining a safe subway to destroying the world's nuclear arsenals.

flight sequence, Superman and Lois Lane have a heart-to-heart talk about the problems of the world—and the world's mightiest hero. "That scene is one of the movie's centerpieces," Reeve remarks. "Lois comes over to Clark's house because they're supposed to go to an awards dinner. He's still brooding over what to do about the nuclear thing and has forgotten to get changed. Lois sees he has a problem and asks, 'Is there anything I can do?' He says, 'Yeah, let's get some fresh air.' So, he takes her flying. It's Superman's version of taking a walk around the block, which we all do when we're stumped by a problem. When they come back, he says, 'I really needed that. You make me laugh.' Lois is Superman's real contact with the human race.

In *Superman IV*, the original superhero has a high moon showdown with Lex Luthor's Nuclear Man.

Superman Photos: Trademark & Copyright 1987 DC Comics Inc.

Lois Lane (Margot Kidder) is still Superman's girl friend, but Lacy Warfield (Mariel Hemingway, left) wants to be Clark Kent's companion.

Reeve is pleased to learn that the comic book Lex Luthor now takes after his cinematic counterpart (Gene Hackman).

They're beyond being lovers now; they're very close friends."

Before they take off, Clark Kent reveals to Lois Lane that he is Superman. The revelation brings back Lois' memories of the couple's affair in *Superman II*. By the trip's end, Superman covers up his secret identity again with one of his patented super-kisses. Reeve maintains that Superman will never be able to fully share the knowledge that he is Clark Kent.

"Clark is an indispensible part of the folklore," he says. "He makes the fantasy of Superman more appealing. The idea that within this apparent klutz is this shining hero is a fantasy to which all of us in the audience can relate. It's a Walter Mitty kind of dream that maybe there is a hero in each of us who could be let out or discovered. So, there's a recognition factor. Clark is a way to connect this hero to the audience.

"Superman isn't trying to humble himself by adopting a secret identity. But in order to have a normal day-to-day existence, to interact with people, you don't go around dressed in a Superman costume all the time. You wouldn't get a moment's peace. Every time a cat was stuck in a tree, someone would be asking for your help."

Though he has learned, like Sean Connery before him, to never say "never" again, has Reeve decided yet if he'll don the red-and-blue costume for a possible *Superman V*? "I haven't really given that any thought," admits Reeve. "Let's see how *Superman IV* goes first. I hope this one goes through the roof, and then we can think about *Superman V*."

Whether or not there are future Superman films, the Man of Steel's adventures will continue to be chronicled in several monthly comic-book series. Although he has heard about the revisions in Superman's four-color career, Reeve was pleased to learn that John Byrne and Marv Wolfman have drawn some of their inspiration from the first Superman movie. "That's very nice," Reeve notes. "I wasn't aware of that. I'm afraid I haven't gotten around to digging through the comic books. When we got the story going for *Superman IV*, we did meet with DC Comics for their input. They have to be considered and they seemed very pleased. There have been no problems.

"All we really do is stick to the basic Superman legend and then use the movies as guides. The precedent was established in *Superman: The Movie*. Everything we do refers to the history of the other movies because that's what the audience seeing the movies is most familiar with. We figured the audience knows the Superman films better than they know the comic book."

With almost 50 years of history behind him, Superman is certainly the most well-known superhero, and his status as an American legend has made the film series popular with audiences of all ages. "Superman is a basic fantasy in all of us," Reeve agrees, "and the idea that [Superman creators] Jerry Siegel and Joe Shuster had about a man who could fly is the basic original concept from which almost all other heroes are derived. I don't even know what Spider-Man or Captain America or any of those other guys can do, but everybody knows that Superman flies and that goes right to the heart of it. That's our fantasy whether we're three or 93.

"What all of us making *Superman IV* are most interested in is presenting a hero who can be admired by all age groups, a hero who can hold on to old-fashioned values without being too square or ridiculous. In contrast to many modern heroes who have to be up-to-the-minute and in vogue to hook the audience, Superman stays in fashion by holding on to old values and remaining constant.

"Leaving aside the plot and all the standard Superman movie goodies—which are there in *Superman IV*—the main thing we tried to put on screen is the image of Superman as leader rather than a muscleman," says Christopher Reeve. "He's not a one-man vigilante force who goes around knocking people's heads together. He's more reserved. Superman's attitude is that people have to solve their own problems, they can't always look to superheroes. That's what makes Superman more like student council president than Rambo." ■

COMICS SCENE

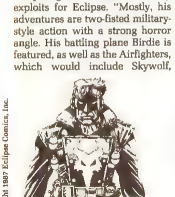
Airboy Above All

Look, every two weeks! It's a bird, it's a plane, it's Airboy in the plane! *Who?* "He's the son of the original Golden Age Airboy who appeared in Hillman Comics in the '40s and early '50s and is heir to a multi-national fortune," explains Charles Dixon, who pilots the young hero's new, bi-weekly exploits for Eclipse. "Mostly, his adventures are two-fisted military-style action with a strong horror angle. His battling plane Birdie is featured, as well as the Airfighters, which would include Skywolf, Valkyrie, the Flying Fool and others. We also have the Skywolf backup, and both stories are paced in the same breakneck way, like a movie serial."

As the action continues this summer, readers will experience the return from the grave of Manic, the gunslinging drug runner. Misery, a demonic entity that lives up to its name, "restores him to life and sends him on a revenge mission against Airboy and the other Airfighters," reveals Dixon. "That's a lengthy storyline and will also see the return of the Heap on a regular basis. In the Skywolf backup, we'll continue through the Korean War and the Bald Eagle will be returning too.

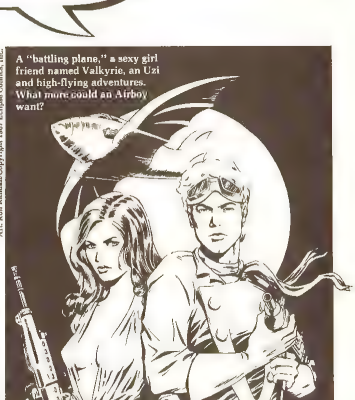
"In August is the *Airmaidens Special*," Dixon adds. "It's a one-shot and is dessert after the *Valkyrie* mini-series, which got a little heavy, dark and dour at times. It's called 'Three-Day Weekend,' and features Valkyrie, the new Black Angel and a new character called Lupina, who is a south of the border female version of Skywolf. Basically, Valkyrie goes away on a vacation, and it turns out that the island she's staying on for her vacation is haunted by a zombie army who are being put together to invade Bogantilla, the Latin American country where Airboy's first adventure took place."

—*Daniel Dickholtz*



Art: Timothy Truman/Copyright 1987 Eclipse Comics, Inc.

The toughest (and oldest) Airfighter around, Skywolf helps Airboy out with present-day battles while worrying about his own in the past.



Art: Ron Randall/Copyright 1987 Eclipse Comics, Inc.

A "battling plane," a sexy girl friend named Valkyrie, an Uzi and high-flying adventures. What more could an Airboy want?

Mourning Becomes Matt Murdock

Following his triple success in 1986 with *Dark Knight* and the "Batman: Year One" series in *Batman* for DC and the *Elektra: Assassin* series for Marvel's Epic Comics line, Frank Miller is now finishing his long-awaited *Elektra* graphic novel for Marvel. Elektra is the woman whom Matt Murdock, the future superhero named Daredevil, loved while both were in college. After her father's death, Elektra became the ninja assassin, some of whose earlier exploits were chronicled in the Epic series. She later clashed with Daredevil, was killed and apparently resurrected. The forthcoming graphic novel, which is set at a time *before* Miller's most recent run on *Daredevil*, concerns itself with how Matt Murdock copes with his intense feelings towards Elektra.

The graphic novel, written, drawn and inked by Miller and colored by Lynn Varley, will run at least 80 pages. "It has been growing like Topsy," Miller says. "He doesn't want to say much about the plot. "It's a mixed bag. It's a horror story and it's also an adventure story." But Miller is highly enthusiastic about it. "I think it's the most visual piece I've done since *Ronin*. I'm having a ball with it. It's very, very exciting."

—*Peter Sanderson*

Daredevil Art: Truitenuek & Copyright 1987 Marvel Entertainment Group

Frank Miller will return to haunt Daredevil with the remembrance of Elektra.

Alan Moore's Future Plans

Don't expect any *Watchmen* spin-offs from Alan Moore. Due to a disagreement with DC over their new ratings system, the award-winning scribe is "not likely to be doing any work for them for the immediate future," Moore says, outside of his contractual obligations. Still, he admits, "We can more or less do *Tales of the Black Freighter* anyway. It doesn't have to be that name. If Dave [Gibbons] and I want to do pirate stories, then we can just as easily do them. But no, I'm not planning any sequels to *Watchmen*, and I have no ideas for a *Minutemen* series at the moment."

Besides, the extra work would have been something Moore really doesn't need right now. "I've gotten to the stage where I'm quite tired and I just really want a couple of months off," he explains. "For the last eight years, I've been working 70 hour weeks, working weekends—most of the time I would leave my typewriter on—and I'm finally just getting to the end of it."

But before he takes that well-earned respite, there are still some matters which still require his attention, such as completing *V for Vendetta* and his other contractual work for DC, wrapping up *Miracleman* for Eclipse, scripting the cross-company Swamp Thing/Mr. Monster team-up, and a number of graphic novels for Fantagraphics. Additionally, he's putting the finishing touches on a science-fantasy screenplay, *Fashion Beast*, and "I've promised Tor Books that I'll write a novel for them; I have no idea what it will be about but I promised them I would do one," Moore notes.

"After that, I'm going to plan what to do next. It might involve self-publishing, it might involve working with other publishers. Perhaps more book publishers will be interested in bringing comics out in book form. There are several possibilities.

"It's an interesting time for comics. There's a new audience out there who are going to want a different sort of comic, a different sort of story, perhaps a different approach. They're not going to be endlessly interested in superheroes," Moore suggests. "There's an awful lot of genres that have remained completely untouched for decades that I would like to mess around with and do adult stories and explore the medium as fully as possible for an adult audience. But, until I've had a few months to put my feet up and actually see what my next move should be, I haven't got firm details or specifics."

—Daniel Dickholtz

Wordsmith Art: R.G. Taylor/Copyright 1987 Dave Darrigo

The prolific *Wordsmith* will undergo many changes before making his last issue's deadline.

Time Out for "Wordsmith"

Wordsmith, Renegade's experimental novelistic story of 1935 pulp magazine writer Clay Washburn, will undergo dramatic changes beginning this summer in an effort to resolve the character's fate before being suspended with issue #12.

"The series' time frame is going to be telescoped radically," according to creator/writer Dave Darrigo, beginning with issue #10. "It's a story involving the Spanish Civil War. Clay tries to stop a friend of his from going to fight in the Spanish Civil war.

"Issue #11 jumps to the first week of September in 1939," Darigo continues. "Clay is married and his wife is expecting, and actually gives birth on the same day the war breaks out in Europe, when the Germans invaded Poland. By this time, Clay is working in Hollywood and has broken into the slick magazines. His good friend at the newsstand, Joe, dies. And that emphasizes the passing of the era.

"Issue #12 should be of interest to most comic fans. Clay's editor, Sam Kaiser, is released from the pulp house he's working at and signs on with a comic book publisher. He recruits Clay to do his own version of Captain America, basing it on one of his old pulp characters. Then, Clay gets recruited into the Army. Not as a soldier. He's a paper shuffler. He heads off to Washington at the story's end. That's where *Wordsmith* ends, for now."

Darrigo says that while Renegade Press would like to continue Wordsmith, low royalties caused by slowing sales have made it difficult for artist Rick Taylor to continue the series.

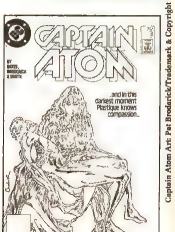
—Will Murray

At the Heart of "Captain Atom"

These books, *Captain Atom* and *Video Jack*, represent Cary Bates, phase two," says the longtime comic book writer, who made his name scripting well-known characters such as Superman and the Flash (which he discussed in COMICS SCENE #11). Now, Bates is expanding his horizons, writing superheroes who break some of the time-honored traditions.

"*Captain Atom* is the thing that turned me around. I spent so many years doing the Flash, your basic superhero, that when it came time to do a new character, I didn't want to repeat what I had already done for 20 years. Well, Captain Atom has to be a superhero, with a costume and all that—but I asked myself, 'How many things can you change and still keep that basic superhero approach?' I wanted to have the things that would please the superhero freaks out there, but also enough things that older readers—who are a little tired of that stuff—would appreciate.

—Patrick Daniel O'Neill



Captain Atom Art: Pat Broderick/Trademark & Copyright 1987 DC Comics, Inc.

The Beetle Goes On

What's upcoming in the *Blue Beetle*? Writer Len Wein, now teamed on the monthly series with artist Ross Andru, has a definitive answer to that question.

"I'm not 100 percent certain," he announces. "Generally, those who enjoy the *Blue Beetle* do so because its watchword is entertainment. Like the superhero comics of years ago, you have a good time."

For Blue Beetle, Wein does plan more human interest stories in the style of "Henchman" (#8), which focused on one of the usually unnamed minions always hired by comic book baddies to execute their nefarious schemes. "And you can also expect the usual gang of idiots—offbeat villains and the like—who make for an entertaining comic," Wein advises.

"Usually, when I'm writing, I have an actor in mind for a character. For the Ted Kord Blue Beetle, it's Bruce Boxleitner or Tom Hanks. That tells you something about this book's direction. Blue Beetle is really a superhero of the '60s for the '80s."

—David McDonnell

Of "Knights" & "Thieves"

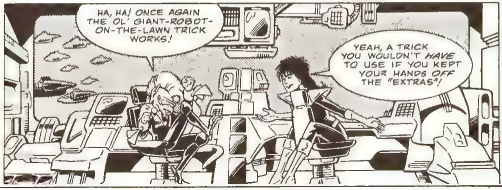
I'm sometimes afraid that *Southern Knights* and *Aristocratic Xtraterrestrial Time-Traveling Thieves* (often shortened to *X-Thieves*) will be dumped into the pack of black & whites that are really only fanzine quality work," says writer Henry Vogel. "It's a worry because there are people out there who will say, 'Black & white is crap' and won't look at any black & white books. We have to be afraid of that, because we have fought tooth and nail to get to the position we are in now. Compared to many black & whites, we're selling very well. But I've read sweeping proclamations announcing, 'Black & whites are dead!'

Is the answer, then, to get out of the black & white field? Vogel, whose *Southern Knights* was one of the ground-breakers, isn't sure. "It certainly wouldn't bother me to work on a color book, but what I would like to see is the circulation on our books improve to the point where we could do them in color, rather than necessarily zipping off to Marvel," he says. "I've been in the black & white end of the industry longer than most people. Only *Cerebus*, *Elfquest*, *First Kingdom* and maybe the black & white *Nexus* were out when *Southern Knights* started. We've been around for five years, two or three years ahead of the *Turtles*—back when black & white was unpopular.

"As far as long-range goals are concerned—commercially, I would like to see the books make me rich," Vogel laughs. "I would love to see a *Southern Knights* or *X-Thieves* movie—preferably both—and I would like to see the circulation increase. Creatively, I like to keep improving the product. Looking back, I see my work getting better in every issue, and I want that to continue. But if you have too much of a long-range plan in a series, you limit yourself," he laughs again. "I haven't planned to kill anyone off."

—Patrick Daniel O'Neill

***X-Thieves: The Movie* is a project writer Henry Vogel would like to see happen once circulation increases.**


HA, HA! ONCE AGAIN THE OL' GIANT-ROBOT-ON-THE-LAWN TRICK WORKS!
YEAH, A TRICK YOU WOULDN'T HAVE TO USE IF YOU KEPT YOUR HANDS OFF THE "EXTRAS"!

X-Thieves, art: Mark Propst/Copyright 1987 Henry Vogel, Mark Propst, Lovern Kindzierski & Anthony Tollin

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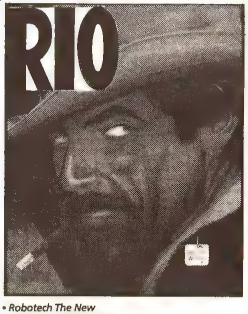

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Origins of Manhunters

Young *All-Stars* will be presenting several mini-series within a series, illustrated by different artists, according to Roy Thomas, the title's co-creator/co-writer (with his wife, Dann Thomas). Malcolm Jones III will continue as the book's inker.

"With issue #6 on, we'll be doing mini-series which emphasize different characters," explains Thomas. "Mike Bair will be doing a story that deals with the background and origin of Neptune Perkins. Brian Murray will be doing some stories about Iron Munro and Flying Fox, characters he visually created."

Issues #8-9 are the *Young All-Stars/Millennium* crossovers, with art by Murray and Jones. "*Millennium* has to do with the battle between the Manhunters and the Green Lantern Corps," notes Thomas. "Since there were two characters named Manhunter back in the '40s, including the Simon/Kirby character who was the prototype of the Manhunter androids, we'll be featuring those two Manhunters and the original Green Lantern. It will be sort of a 1942 prologue to certain elements of the *Millennium* series."

Secret Origins #22, written by Thomas with art by Howard Simpson, "is the story of *all* the Manhunters—except the Martian Manhunter," he quips. "It has the Simon/Kirby Manhunter (Paul Kirk), the Quality Manhunter (Dan Richards) and his dog Thor, the origin of the Manhunters in Space, even the Mark Shaw Manhunter which Jack Kirby did in a *First Issue Special*. It ties everything together as well as I could possibly understand it.

"Since Paul Kirk is dead, but Dan Richards is very much alive, he's featured prominently in *Infinity, Inc.* #48-47. This ties in, of course, not just with *Millennium* but also with events in *Young All-Stars*. I always liked the idea of the Manhunters though I've been confused about exactly what they were doing. It has been a monumental task and Dick Giordano has sworn that never again will he do a weekly series."

A new *Shazam!* mini-series is in the works for DC, written by the Thomases and illustrated by Frank Travella, as well as a four-issue *Crimson Avenger* mini-series, drawn by Greg Brooks, that would take place a few weeks after *Secret Origins* #5. Roy and Dann Thomas are also discussing some work with Marvel, as well as continuing their work on *Captain Thunder & Blue Bolt*, the father and son superhero team they created for Hero Comics.

"That's what's keeping me out of mischief," Roy Thomas says.

—*Carr D'Angelo*

Any conflict that exists between members of *Strikeforce: Morituri* will be resolved by issue #20—with their deaths.

Full Strike for "Morituri"

My criteria on *Strikeforce: Morituri* are much higher than on most other books," says Peter B. Gillis of his current, critically acclaimed Marvel series. The battle will continue between the alien Horde and Earth's Morituri heroes—who will each die within a year after receiving their powers.

"By issue #20, *all* of the first generation heroes from issue #1 will be dead," explains Gillis. "This was the idea all along. People will be pleased or depressed, but we have held to our original concept.

"The face of the war will look very different than it did in issue #1 by then," Gillis hints. "At that point, we'll be taking off in a new direction."

Gillis is also preparing *Tailgunner Joe*, a new six-issue limited series, for DC. "It's a nice family book about a killer cyborg," he says. The art is by newcomer Tom Artis.

"Tom is the best artist in comics not working in comics," Gillis enthuses. "He will startle and impress a *lot* of people!"

—*Kim Howard Johnson*

Comics Cool Down

Hot comics—those books where demand unexpectedly outstrips supply—will be rarer than ever this fall, according to veteran retailers Ward Batty and Cliff Biggers.

Biggers, who covers retailing for *The Comics Buyer's Guide*, blames the scarcity on retailers' fears of being burned again. "Most shops were hurt by the comics glut earlier this year," he says. "You'll see more stores willing to change not having the next hot book so they won't have to eat 50 others."

Those stores will carry few black & white comics, particularly parody books. "We did a poll in our stores [in Atlanta] on worst comics of the year, and seven people wrote 'any parody comic,' " Biggers says. "As a group, parody comics carried the category." Adds Batty, who also writes for *CBG*: "Parodies are dead meat."

Which black & whites will survive? "The ones good enough to survive as color comics," Biggers says, citing *Micra* and *Captain Confederacy* as examples. Batty says he favors unusual books, like *Stig's Inferno* and *Reid Fleming*. Both give high marks to Paul Chadwick's *Concrete*.

As for the major publishers, Biggers and Batty agree that Marvel will continue to dominate overall sales, but DC will produce the new "hot" books. Sales are good on DC's revamped flagship books featuring Superman and Batman, and *Justice League* and *Flash* are becoming genuine fan favorites. The infusion of ex-Marvel talent at DC may be the reason. "We sold twice as many *Batmans* [during the recent Frank Miller/David Mazzucchelli run] as we did X-Men for those four months," Biggers says. "Many of those were to people who normally buy nothing but Marvel."

Batty and Biggers also predict:

- Japanese-derived comics may boom, thanks to several publishers testing the market here with reprints of Japanese comics. According to Batty, the vast inventory of Japanese material would be inexpensive—and profitable—to reprint here, provided it sells.
- More popular comics will be reprinted as trade paperbacks. "It's a good deal for everybody," Batty says. "The retailers know what they're getting, and the customers know what they're getting." With pre-sold properties like *Dark Knight*, trade paperbacks have sold well consistently.
- Sales of Marvel's New Universe titles will continue to erode. "I wouldn't be surprised to see [the New Universe characters] all wake up, find that it was a strange dream and that they really live in the Marvel Universe," Biggers says.

If you think the future sounds less than thrilling, you aren't the only one. "The next few months won't be as interesting as the same period a year ago," Batty announces. "The market was more accessible then, and here was this golden opportunity for small publishers to do something really different. Instead, they blew it, and we got the same old crap."

—*Jim Massara*

In Control with "Micra"

We knew going in that, for a black & white book to have longterm success—especially one with a one-word title, a female lead, and dealing with science fiction *without* comedy, like *Micra*—we had to produce a comic that was at least as good, or better, than ones from Marvel, DC or First," recalls Lamar Waldron, writer and co-creator of Comics Interview's *Micra*. "The recent black-and-white 'bust' hasn't discouraged us—I think we're producing better work now because we have more experience.

"We're not just doing *Micra* for the sake of a quarterly comic book. We hope to produce something with lasting value, that can be reprinted as a graphic novel in a few years. Ted Boonthanakit [*Micra*'s artist] and I have no desire to just take advantage of the market. It may sound pretentious, but we're trying to make an artistic statement here."

Unlike many of the writers and artists in the black & white end of comics, Waldron doesn't see *Micra* as his chance to prove himself to the bigger comics publishers. "At the moment, the only way I can see myself working for one of the larger companies would be a situation like the one I have with *Micra*—*I* maintain control and ownership of the character," he explains. "I can't see how a writer can do his best work on a project when he knows it can be taken from him at any time and changed in whatever fashion the new writer sees fit. The only thing that would get me involved in writing a regular monthly comic would be as a way of paying my dues to the future generation of would-be creators, or as a nostalgic-type thing working on a character like Captain America. There's a need for those books to be out there for the younger reader."

—*Patrick Daniel O'Neill*

Micra Art: Copyright 1987 Ted Boonthanakit

The recent black & white glut has encouraged Micra's creator to produce better work.

Avengers Art: Mark Bright/Joe Rubinstein/Trademark & Copyright 1987 Marvel Entertainment Group

***Solo Avengers* assemble monthly as a back-up to Hawkeye's own tales to astonish.**

Avengers Go Solo

When *Solo Avengers* debuts from Marvel in August, Hawkeye will get his own regular feature—and a revised "untold" origin story.

"It involves a menace from Hawkeye's past," says series editor Mark Gruenwald. "In a nutshell, it's the guy who taught him to shoot the bow." Tom DeFalco will write the continuing feature, with pencils by Mark Bright and inks by Joe Rubinstein.

Each month, the 11-page Hawkeye continuity will be backed up by another 11-page story, spotlighting one of the 24 other Avengers currently without a regular series. The first back-up, by DeFalco, Jim Lee and Al Williamson, features Mockingbird. Captain Marvel, Moon Knight and Scarlet Witch will appear in subsequent back-ups by Roger Stern, Steve Englehart and various newcomers.

While *Solo Avengers* marks a new beginning for Hawkeye, it also marks a revival of sorts for Marvel: comic books with two separate stories per issue. Before *Strange Tales* broke the ice earlier this year, Marvel hadn't published a split book in about 15 years. "I hope there's room in the marketplace for a book like this," Gruenwald says. "It's offbeat. It's a gamble."

But it's not stupid. Hawkeye consistently draws more mail than any of the other Avengers currently without their own feature. The Avengers books in particular and team books in general have sold well for Marvel. And the rotating hero concept allows Marvel to put a different character's logo on the cover every month—which the company must do to preserve its rights to the trademarks.

—*Jim Massara*

Mayhem in Mutantland:

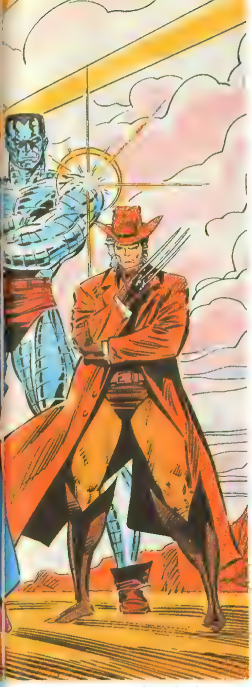
Death, Sacrifice, Torture, Betrayal

Chris Claremont, X-Men writer, and Louise Simonson, scripter of New Mutants and X-Factor, are still making life miserable for those born with x-tra abilities.

By PATRICK DANIEL O'NEILL

The thrust of *X-Men* for the rest of 1987 is death and sacrifice," says Chris Claremont, who has been writing the adventures of Marvel's premiere mutant team for more than 10 years. "For the next bunch of issues, I'm using, as a paradigm, the battle between the Spartans under Leonidas and the Persians under Xerxes at Thermopylae. The *X-Men*, of course, are the Spartans, hopelessly outnumbered, fighting to preserve the world, humanity, civilization as they know it, from the onrushing hordes of evil."

Claremont's run on the book is



Art: Mark Silvestri/Dan Green

Chris Claremont sees his outlaw heroes as "the Spartans, hopelessly outnumbered, fighting to preserve the world."

precedent-setting, particularly since he also created one of the *X-Men*'s sister titles, *The New Mutants*, and has written the vast majority of the spin-off mini-series, such as *Wolverine* and *Magik*.

Continuing his description of the current storyline, Claremont notes, "It's basically the culmination of a great deal of stuff I've been building up over the last couple of years—will Storm get her powers back? Will the world come to an end? To an extent, it will ameliorate, if not resolve, the current situation of anti-mutant hysteria. We hope it will bring about a major change both in the mutant books and the Marvel Universe."

Louise Simonson, "Weezie" to her friends, has recently taken over the scripting chores on *The New Mutants*, in addition to continuing to write *X-Factor* and *Power Pack*. Simonson, under the name Louise Jones, edited *X-Men* and *New Mutants* for many years.

"I'm making *New Mutants* lighter than what Chris was writing," she says. "The New Mutants seem more irresponsible than the X-Men; more the way I remember I was at that age. It's a cross between *X-Factor* and *Power Pack*. *X-Factor* is death and destruction, torture and betrayal; *Power Pack* is more cheerful. *New Mutants* is an extremely cheerful portrayal of death and destruction, torture and betrayal."

A good deal of the current anti-mutant hysteria has been created by events within *X-Factor*, as the original X-Men team—Cyclops, Marvel Girl, Iceman, Beast and Angel—attempted to recruit young mutants by posing as human mutant-hunters. It's a mission that seems to have backfired. Simonson agrees.

"X-Factor's crusade is heading to its logical conclusion," she reveals. "We set up a premise—the mutants trained by Xavier decide, for some unknown reason, that the best way to find and train other mutants is to make mutants appear to be evil menaces, more dangerous than they are—so that X-Factor, essentially a goon squad, should be called in to 'get rid' of the dangerous mutants. That's an insane premise—there must be more to it. There *must* be a reason why these five generally sane people should have chosen this cover. We're going to find out the answer—and after issue #25, due out in November, X-Factor as we know it now will no longer exist."

The difference between the *modi operandi* of the two teams has put X-Men and X-Factor at odds with each other. Neither writer believes that conflict will last much longer.

"At this point, X-Men and X-Factor are basically ignorant of each other's reasoning," Claremont explains. "The X-Men don't know why the original team has become X-Factor; X-Factor doesn't know why the new team is working with Magneto. Events will occur, over the next few months, which I think will make a confrontation that much more inevitable—or impossible. It depends on how you interpret the events."

"The enmity between X-Factor and X-Men will not last forever," Simonson comments. "By summer 1988, I think we'll have resolved that. After *X-Men* #226 and *X-Factor* #25, it will become something of a moot point. Some people in each team will know what the others are doing, but they won't be in a position to do anything about it."

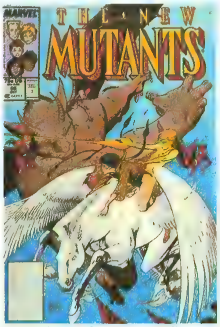
A continuing plot twist in *X-Factor* has been the relationship between Scott Summers (Cyclops) and Jean Grey (Marvel Girl). While Scott believed Jean was dead, he met and married her look-alike, Madelyne Pryor. Upon Jean's "resurrection," Scott discovered he still had deep feelings for her, which created a rift between him and Madelyne. Now, he believes Madelyne is dead. The growing passion between Cyclops and Marvel Girl will ignite soon, says Simonson.

"Scott and Jean's relationship doesn't affect the nature of X-Factor as directly as what their foe, Apocalypse, is up to. That will affect it much more—between Apocalypse and the Right, X-Factor's eyes are going to be opened to the reality of what's happening. The romance between Scott and Jean will start to heat up around year's end, and when X-Factor hits the climax of its transformation, things will be really hot, fairly steamy—as steamy as you can get in a Code-approved comic. There is a problem—Scott does not yet know—nor will he know for quite a while—that his wife, Madelyne Pryor, is still *alive*."

The founder of the X-Men, Professor Charles Xavier, is in space meanwhile, having decided to stay with his lady-love, an exiled alien empress. Xavier's turning over his school's operations to Magneto, once the X-Men's greatest enemy, is one factor which has split the old and new teams. Claremont says the first X-Man will stay in space.

"Professor Xavier is *never* going to return to any of his three sets of proteges, if I have anything to say about it," he announces. "If Xavier comes back, any possibility of real conflict between the X-Men, X-Factor and the New Mutants pretty much goes out the window. He's the one person all three teams would respect, would listen to. If he said, 'Stop this foolishness,' they would stop. You really can't argue with the person who's the next best thing to Dad.

"There are more interesting story possibilities with Magneto in charge, rather than Charlie," Claremont notes.



New Mutants #59 Art: Kevin Newlan

Louise Simonson hopes to present "an extremely cheerful portrayal of death and destruction" in *The New Mutants*.

X-Calibre Art: Alan Davis/Paul Neary

Arthur Adams drafted this possible new outfit for Rachel Summers, Phoenix II.

"With Charlie in charge, you know what it is—he's a good guy, the X-Men are good guys, the New Mutants are good guys, X-Factor are good guys; there's no possibility of falling from grace, no suspense. He's just there. With Magneto, you always have the thought that this guy used to be the number one villain in the Marvel mutant universe. He says he has changed; maybe he seriously believes he has changed, but what if he *hasn't*?

"Because Magneto's a different man from Xavier, he deals with situations differently. He's much more prone to making mistakes, as he has in a couple of issues I've done. That in itself leads to conflict. No matter how much the X-Men and New Mutants trust him, he still has a history with X-Factor and the Avengers that can't be ignored. There's more uncertainty with Magneto, more suspense; and that's basically what we're in the business of marketing.

"We don't want anyone to get bored; we want them coming back issue after issue. This is melodrama, so the way to do that is to make things bad, then make them worse. We offer a hope, a possibility of a happy ending. And once you've given them happiness, you pull the rug out from under everybody, so you're tumbling down the mountainside again."

Claremont stresses that the mutant prejudice in the Marvel world is analogous

Captain Britain, along with some old and new X-Men, will form her Majesty's own mutant group, *X-Calibre*.

to real world concerns. "The current plotline will *not* bring mutant prejudice to an end," he states. "I don't think anything could. If you could end prejudice in the so-called real world, then I would immediately end that storyline in *X-Men*. But so long as it exists in reality, then it has to exist in this fictional counterpoint to reality. More and more in *X-Men*, I've been trying to shift the focus from mutants as a people to be feared toward them as a people to be exploited. That's what the Hellfire Club is all about—using mutants as a natural resource, as a means to establish and maintain power.

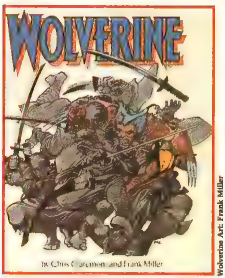
"It's partly a question of balancing our aesthetic instincts with the commercial demands," Claremont elaborates. "The *X-Men* canon is now a major part of Marvel's profit picture, in a way that *Spider-Man* used to be, in the way that *Superman* is at DC. That gives the books a particular responsibility in developing profit for Marvel, that's why there were so many *X-Men* crossovers last year. So, you look at what you want—what would drive the readers most crazy—and what would be best for the book, in terms of thematic growth and long-term viability."

The biggest change in *X-Factor* has been a revised version of Warren Worthington, the Angel, beginning with his apparent death. "Nobody seemed terribly upset that Angel was dead, even before we revealed that he wasn't," Simonson reports. "We got letters that said, 'Gee, it's too bad you killed him; but I never liked him anyway. So, who's going to take his place?' Warren wasn't the most popular of characters, and I think it's because he was perfect; he had everything. It's hard to feel much empathy for a perfect character. But when we're finished with him, he's not going to be perfect anymore. He'll be so endearingly imperfect, he could be the new Wolverine of our group. He'll be so different, that Warren's presence alone will change the nature of X-Factor."

X-Men, *New Mutants*, *X-Factor* and seemingly a spin-off or crossover title every month. Is there too much *X-Men* material on the newsstands? Claremont says he does have some concern.

"I worry constantly that the X-Men are suffering from over-exposure," he admits. "On the other hand, I have yet to be proven right. I think it's like everything else—a good crossover or spin-off can only rebound to the parent title's betterment. *X-Factor*, as it is now, only complements *X-Men*, and vice-versa. The problem is that the more crossovers you do, the greater the likelihood that they won't be as good as you wish they could have been. It took something like 14 *Superman*-related titles in the '60s to vitiate Superman—we're a long way from there. On the bottom line, so long as the main book, *X-Men*, maintains its quality and integrity, then the readers will look at it with a different eye than they'll look at the spin-offs. They'll accept the track record of *X-Men* as being minimally affected by the work of others on the spin-offs.

Good products, like his team-up with Frank Miller on the *Wolverine* mini-series, keep Claremont from fretting over the proliferation of X-Men related material.



Wolverine Art: Frank Miller

"In addition, you have to find the best people to do the spin-offs. In the case of *New Mutants*, I think Louise is doing a far better job with the team than I did. The sensibilities she brings to it as a writer, especially working with Brett Blevins as the penciller, are giving me perspectives on the book and the characters that can only help when I pick it up again."

That time may be further in the future than originally supposed. "At first, we thought I would write *New Mutants* for

Walt Simonson interprets the original X-Men who would later become *X-Factor*.

All X-Men, X-Calibre, X-Factor, Power Pack & New Mutants Art: Trademark & Copyright 1986, 1987 Marvel Entertainment Group

IN THE BEGINNING, FOUR CHILDREN--DESTROYER, MOLECULA, COUNTER WEIGHT, STAR SMASH--WERE GIVEN POWERS BY AN ALIEN AND TOLD TO SAVE THEIR WORLD! THEY WERE JOINED BY ANOTHER CHILD--RATTLETALE--WHO WAS BORN TO HIS POWERS AND TO HIS MANDATE!
POWER PACK
SO FAR THE GOING'S BEEN ROUGH! SOON, IT'S GOING TO GET ROUGHER!

Power Pack Art: Jon Bogdanove

Compared to other series which star X-powered people, *Power Pack* is a romp.

six issues," Simonson says, "but now it might be a year, it might be permanently—who knows? I'm also continuing to write *X-Factor* and *Power Pack*, though it's possible that Jon Bogdanove will take over *Power Pack* eventually."

All three books have had their difficulties holding on to an artistic team, although *X-Factor* seems to be on solid ground, since the penciller is the writer's husband, Walt Simonson, best known for his writing and artwork on *Thor*. Together, they're one of the few husband-wife teams in comics.

"Does living with the artist make it easier or harder? I don't know, let me ask Walt." Simonson repeats the question to her husband, before responding. "He says it's tougher to lie about how much you've got done. It's easier to discuss plot. I script from Walt's thumbnail sketches. He takes my plot, does his thumbnails, I do a script from that. It makes it very flexible for both of us. I probably couldn't do that with another artist, or someone I didn't live with. For one thing, Walt's thumbnails are real loose—sometimes it's difficult to tell what's a man and what's a helicopter, but you get the idea of general positioning."

X-Men has just finished a 12-month span without a regular artist. While Claremont admits it can cause difficulties, he says the quality of the guest pencillers has been exemplary.

"Only the crassest of people would complain about working with Rick Leonardi, Alan Davis, Barry Windsor-Smith—you're talking about some of the best people in the industry," Claremont remarks. "From that point-of-view, it has been kind of a treat. In terms of the series' long-term viability, I always get nervous when you play musical artists. Part of the series' strength is that a kid knows that the third Thursday of every month, *X-Men* will be on the stands—written by so-and-so, drawn by such-and-such—and it will look fundamentally the same.

"It's no surprise that the *X-Men* achieved its singular strength on a three-year run of me, John Byrne and Terry Austin. The reader knew every month that the book would have a certain look and a certain dependability. Within that dependability, all hell might break loose, but you had that dependable frame. Now, with Mark Silvestri and Dan Green, I hope we have that consistent frame."

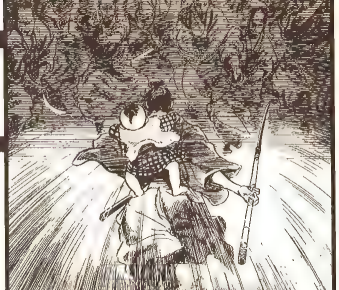
Neither writer is limited to mutants as a source of inspiration, though Simonson notes that she is contemplating a *Power Pack-New Mutants* crossover in the near future. Claremont, who has a prose novel, *First Flight*, due from Ace Books this fall, is also developing a comic-book title called *X-Calibre*: "It's unapproved at present, but if talking about it will get it approved, I'll happily shoot my mouth off," he says. "Alan Davis and I are working on it, and it will involve Captain Britain and that continuity."

As the legion of mutant teams and titles continues to breed, now expanding across the ocean to England, perhaps humanity—or at least comic-book fans—*should* fear the world's takeover by *homo superior*. ■

The Mutant Massacre may be over, but the war between the Marauder named Sabretooth and X-Man Wolverine is not.

X-Men #222 Art: Mark Silvestri/Dan Green

Lone Wolf and Cub in America



Betrayed, Ogami's only love is for Disgoro—so let others beware.

Art: Frank Miller/Copyright 1987 First Comics Inc. & Global Communications

The influence that the Japanese series had on Frank Miller is evident in his own rendition of *Lone Wolf and Cub*.

Frank Miller heralds the virtues of "Lone Wolf & Cub" & explains how the newly translated Japanese classic has influenced his work.

By PETER SANDERSON

Imagine a grimly obsessed, outlawed avenger, whose sole companion is an innocent child, stalking through a nation in a time of great turmoil. Such a simplified description could fit *Dark Knight*, Frank Miller's highly acclaimed and widely popular series about the Batman's final adventures, published last year by DC Comics. The same basic description also applies to a major influence upon Miller: the famous Japanese comics series *Lone Wolf and Cub*, written by Kazuo Koike and illustrated by Goseki Kojima. First Comics is now bringing *Lone Wolf* to America in an English language adaptation by John Bruno, David Lewis and Alex Wald, and edited by Rick Oliver. The initial 96-page issue went on sale in May; the subsequent square-bound installments will be 64 pages long and will appear monthly. Miller, who has long been one of the series' most vocal supporters in the United States, is doing introductions for the issues and also is illustrating the covers in collaboration with colorist Lynn Varley.

Lone Wolf and *Dark Knight* are radically different in tone and content, but Miller acknowledges that the Japanese series has had a considerable influence on his method of comics storytelling and on his artistic style. That influence was especially strong on *Ronin*, Miller's series for DC that set a masterless samurai and his enemy, a demon, at odds within a city of the future, and which DC will soon be repackaging as a trade paperback.

Why has Miller decided to help First introduce *Lone Wolf and Cub* to the American comics audience? Is he repaying his artistic debt to the series? "If I tried to repay a debt to every book that taught me anything," Miller replies, "I would spend the rest of my life doing it.

Mainly, this is just a comic that I'm in love with, that I really expect people to enjoy, and working on it is an assignment I couldn't turn down. It's too much fun."

The first installment of *Lone Wolf* appeared in Japan in 1970. It was published in 250-page segments over seven years, resulting in 28 volumes. Miller first saw some of these volumes in the early 1980s. "A friend of mine, Laurie Sutton, brought copies of them with her from Japan," he recalls. "The artwork is what struck me about it first, of course, because I couldn't read the text. This is while I was doing *Daredevil* (Miller's initial run on the Marvel Comics series), and it had a great deal to do with my coming up with *Ronin*. Kojima's art had a tremendous effect on me, and I tried to learn as much as I could from it."

Miller thinks that American readers will find the series' samurai hero, Itto Ogami, familiar to a certain degree. "He's a vengeance seeker and a great warrior," Miller notes. "In that respect, he's like a Clint Eastwood character from *High Plains Drifter*. Samurai films and American Western films cross-pollinate on a regular basis."

Ogami was the official executioner for the Shogun, the ruler of Japan. "A very powerful lord," Miller explains, "he cut heads off lords who were commanded by the Shogun to commit ritual *seppuku*," a form of suicide, for violating the Shogun's will. "He was the only threat to the power of the Yagu clan, who functioned as the Shogun's espionage arm. Yagu clan members framed him as attempting to overthrow the Shogun. They tricked the Shogun into ordering the death of Ogami and his son; by this point, they had *already* murdered Ogami's wife."

The innocent Daigoro becomes tainted by the violence which follows his father's trail.

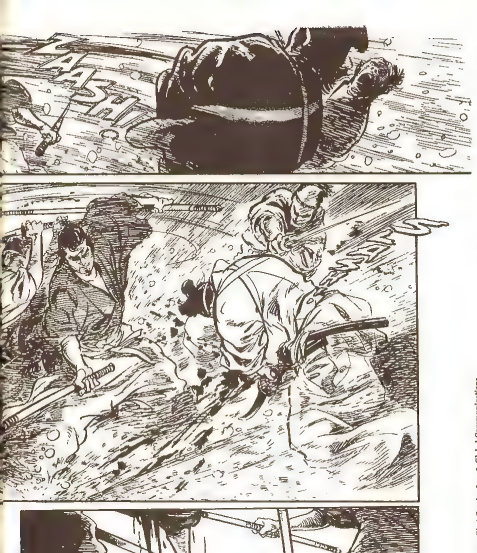
Goseki Kojima's illustrations evoke the fire of an Akira Kurosawa epic.

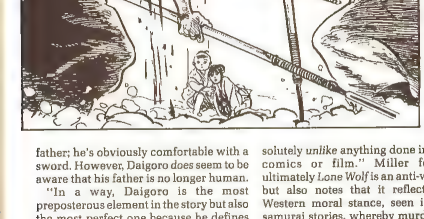
In response, "Ogami declared war on the Yagu clan and on the Shogun and, in a way, on civilization in general, and began wandering across Japan with his son in a wooden baby cart, hiring himself out as an assassin against members of the clan. It really is a story of a powerful lord, one of the great warriors, who becomes something of a demon."

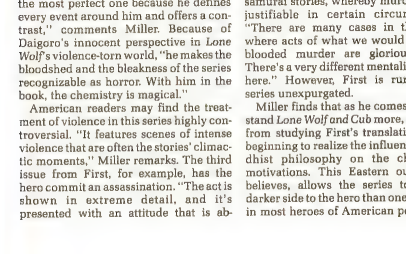
Significantly, that baby cart is itself laden with weapons, including knives and gun barrels.

More important than the evolution of Ogami's character in the series, Miller notes, is that of his son, Daigoro. "I would argue that Daigoro is as much the star of the series as Ogami," he says. Only an infant at the beginning of First's adaptation, Daigoro will grow older as the series progresses. "The boy is an absolute innocent. He's a beautiful little boy who is living in hell with his dad. Kojima and Koike obviously took Daigoro as seriously as any other character in the series. He's not a cute little sidekick. You have to watch him as closely as you watch Ogami. Often when I'm coming up with the cover illustrations, Daigoro is the focal point, everything is going on around him.

"Essentially, Daigoro is the only creature on Earth whom Ogami loves, and Ogami is the only creature on Earth who Daigoro trusts. They're a very devoted father and son. In First's second segment, you get to see how much Daigoro has already learned from his







All Art: Goseki Kojima/Copyright 1987 First Comics Inc. & Global Communications

father; he's obviously comfortable with a sword. However, Daigoro *does* seem to be aware that his father is no longer human.

"In a way, Daigoro is the most preposterous element in the story but also the most perfect one because he defines every event around him and offers a contrast," comments Miller. Because of Daigoro's innocent perspective in *Lone Wolf*'s violence-torn world, "he makes the bloodshed and the bleakness of the series recognizable as horror. With him in the book, the chemistry is magical."

American readers may find the treatment of violence in this series highly controversial. "It features scenes of intense violence that are often the stories' climactic moments," Miller remarks. The third issue from First, for example, has the hero commit an assassination. "The act is shown in extreme detail, and it's presented with an attitude that is absolutely *unlike* anything done in Western comics or film." Miller feels that ultimately *Lone Wolf* is an anti-war series, but also notes that it reflects a non-Western moral stance, seen in various samurai stories, whereby murder can be justifiable in certain circumstances. "There are many cases in this series where acts of what we would call cold-blooded murder are glorious events. There's a very different mentality at work here." However, First is running the series unexpurgated.

Miller finds that as he comes to understand *Lone Wolf and Cub* more, especially from studying First's translations, he is beginning to realize the influence of Buddhist philosophy on the characters' motivations. This Eastern outlook, he believes, allows the series to show a darker side to the hero than one might see in most heroes of American popular fiction. "Ogami seems to experience life through entirely different eyes than we do," observes Miller. "We're getting to see something here that is truly exotic."

As for Kojima's artwork, Miller finds it to be "extremely good comics art. The storytelling is meticulous, and the drawing itself is very, very powerful. What I find particularly fascinating about it is that its approach has very little to do with the tradition of American comics, particularly in terms of his inking." Miller claims to be highly influenced in his own inking style by Kojima. "Kojima seems to gear his work more towards showing the fluidity and speed of figures in motion. He's more concerned with that than he is with capturing each individual form. His figures never seem to be static; they *always* seem to be moving. Kojime turns the image of a figure in motion into the blurred streak one actually sees.

"*Ronin* had samurai sequences in which I was trying to capture the feel of Kojima's artwork, in terms of staging, in particular: which shots are picked when. He does pictures that are amazingly clear in terms of the information they convey. Kojima picks his images with terrific economy. He conveys a great deal very, very quickly.

"*Lone Wolf and Cub* is very much a visually-oriented comic. Twenty pages can go by without words. It has the pictures doing most of the work that the words do in American comics. The storytelling is much more legitimate. In American comics, you often have to wade through three captions just to find the picture, and the caption generally tells you what's in the picture. In *Lone Wolf and Cub*, you have to use your own eyes to figure out what's happening. Entire sides of characters are displayed in small acts they do."

The pacing and story structure of *Lone Wolf* are different from those of American comics, but they make possible what Miller calls "magical scenes" in which "you learn a great deal about the characters and you live through a moment much more intimately." There are, indeed, many characters, for the cast continually changes as Ogami and Daigoro wander through feudal Japan, meeting people from all walks of life.

Lone Wolf and Cub, known as *Kojure Okami*, was not only a highly successful comics series but also spawned a television adaptation and 11 movies, four of which were edited together and released in America as *Shogun Assassin*. Miller believes *Lone Wolf* will win a strong readership here and deservedly so. "This is the sort of thing the term 'graphic novel' should be reserved for. This is a story that has immense texture." And, Frank Miller says, he hopes its example "would help us lose some of our prejudices about comics simply being kids' stuff. I hope it would encourage American cartoonists to attempt projects of greater scope." ■

All Watchmen Art Copyright 1986, 1987 & Trademark DC Comics Inc.
All Art: Dave Gibbons

By
DANIEL DICKHOLTZ,
MARC SHAPIRO &
EDWARD GROSS

Waiting for the WATCHMEN

The clock is ticking as the acclaimed adventure series chronicled by Alan Moore and Dave Gibbons counts down to its cinematic afterlife.

The Watchmen, those hardcore, unorthodox superheroes of an uncertain alternate universe, are making their way to the big screen.

The translation to film of the 12-part DC Comics series, created by writer Alan Moore and artist Dave Gibbons, has received the blessing of 20th Century Fox. DC Comics Vice President Paul Levitz has also confirmed the deal for the film adaptation that will be spearheaded by Joel (*Predator*) Silver.

"I don't know exactly where we're going with the film yet," Silver says. "But I do know that it *will* be made.

"The characters are very realistic. I like the idea that it shows the comic-book world in a more realistic setting. Personally, I feel it is very important that the *Watchmen* movie be made."

Silver, however, concedes that it's still fairly early to be talking particulars.

"I would love to say that we're going to be able to make three Watchmen movies," he explains, "but I don't think that would be very realistic. Ultimately, what we're going to wind up doing is taking elements from all 12 chapters of *Watchmen* and incorporating them into *one* film."

At presstime, though, no script exists for the project. Moore himself was asked to do a treatment, but turned down the opportunity due to prior obligations, while Silver's own frequent collaborator, Steve de Souza, declined for another reason.

"I had a fear that here you're trying to do something deep and serious, and you have all these people running around in costumes. It's going to be a real challenge to make a meaningful serious movie about superheroes." Admits de Souza, "It was a challenge I didn't want to take."

"I can understand that," Moore sympathizes, "because sure, there's something basically absurd about the superhero. In the comic itself, we disarmed that to a degree by saying, '*Obviously*, it's absurd that people wear costumes, so why do they do it?' We rationalized that by saying it might be a sexual peccadillo, an urge for romance, or maybe a form of mental illness. Superheroes are fairly credible *if* they're presented in the right way. But, I do agree that it would be a challenge, and I don't blame de Souza for deciding that."

Sam Hamm is the latest writer to be approached to tackle the material, and after reading his screenplay for *The Batman*, Moore has "a great deal of confidence" in Hamm's ability to meet the challenge of *Watchmen*. Finding a director equally suitable is another matter. While *Predator*'s John McTiernan is considering the project, Moore has been appraising a few others he feels could breathe life into his creation.

For example, "given the density of the detail" involved, Moore suggests, "a director like Alex [*Sid & Nancy*, *Repo Man*] Cox, somebody who has that sort of mind, who can cram the background of a scene with tiny details, bits of dialogue overheard on a television, and somehow you do remember them and they do all tie up, although I can't see Cox being the slightest bit interested in *Watchmen*.

"Another person who might be great for the job would be Nick Roeg, especially since I saw *Insignificance* several months *after* writing *Watchmen* #4 and found out they're almost, but not quite, frame for frame identical. There are images, storytelling devices, falling cogs, the

Rorschach discovers that a crime was committed with malice aforethought, and plans one of his own in return.

overall basic theme of apocalypse and the references to Einstein, things like that. That was quite extraordinary because if you're going to rip off a film like *Insignificance*, then I suppose you really have to do it four months before you've seen it. Again, I couldn't see him being interested in the project.

"There are any number of directors I'm sure would give *Watchmen* their own individual feel and I would be interested to see how any of them handle it," says Moore. "Just the idea of seeing these characters walking about will be quite satisfying no matter who directs."

Producer Joel Silver has already approached one actor: Arnold Schwarzenegger. "I have talked to Arnold about the possibility of his playing Dr. Manhattan," Silver chuckles. "I told him I wanted him to take off all his clothes so I could paint him blue. Arnold wasn't familiar with the comic book, but he was intrigued."

"It might well come about," Moore concedes. "But I wonder whether the public would find Schwarzenegger's recital of quantum theorem convincing."

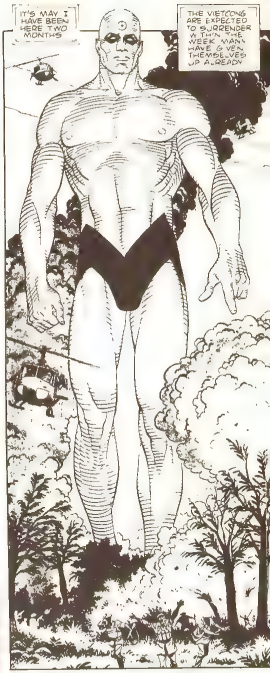
If Moore and Gibbons had their way, "Dr. Manhattan would be a computer animation, something along the lines of a more serious Max Headroom," suggests Moore. "It would give him an unreality next to the human figures, which I think would be jarring and startling, quite like the effect Dr. Manhattan would have in real life.

"I could see Robert De Niro as Dan Dreiberg [Nite Owl]," Moore muses, "because he's very good in nice, low key parts and there is a physical similarity there. I think Michael York for Ozymandias, somebody who's incredibly charming and likable. Maybe Jessica Lange for the Silk Spectre because she has quite an interesting face and eyes. The Comedian, I don't know. You would need somebody terrifying, perhaps Ernest Borgnine in his youth. Many of the characters would have to be played by unknowns, though. Who could you get to play Rorschach? That would *have* to be somebody who was chosen because of his face. I can't imagine how you would cast a well-known actor in that part. But, it is an interesting game to play, to see who you might put in those roles."

But no matter who ultimately appears in the movie, Moore will still have to deal with the fact that despite the title, the final product won't quite be *his Watchmen*.

"I don't know what the film will turn out like, but I do have high hopes. It won't be possible to, say, do all the multi-layered stuff with the pirate comic book. That simply will be too complex to work in a film, at least in a two-hour film. Some of the minor characters may be excised. I'm not sure." Admits Alan Moore, "Obviously, it's in the lap of the gods. The *Watchmen* film won't be the same experience as reading the comic, but it should be interesting." ■

Nite-Owl: Out of retirement and ready for (live) action.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Watch Out, Webhead—The Honeymoon's Over!

By DANIEL DICKHOLTZ

How will marriage affect the original Marvel superhero? Spider-Man editor Jim Salicrup walks Peter Parker down the aisle and details the Webhead's post-honeymoon exploits.

Spider-Man ART: Trademark & Copyright 1992 Marvel Entertainment Group

It's not a hoax, not a dream, not even an issue of *What If?* Nevertheless, Peter Parker, formerly Marvel's most eligible bachelor, has finally settled down. In June, the man inside the Spider-Man costume tied the knot with longtime supporting cast member Mary Jane Watson in an event which had always seemed as likely as Aunt May suffering a fatal heart attack. Still, as far as Spider-Man comics editor Jim Salicrup (in charge of *Amazing Spider-Man, Peter Parker* and *Web of Spider-Man*) is concerned, their marriage was almost inevitable.

"One of the first things anyone—I think it was Aunt May—said about Mary Jane was, 'imagine them getting married. They're the perfect couple.' So, in one way, this is something that has been set up longer than anything else," Salicrup notes. "Both Peter and Mary Jane are at points in their lives where they've been able to solve some of their problems, and getting married becomes something that they should have done long ago—the most obvious, wonderful thing they could do.

"Marriage is very much a part of Peter's personality. There's that line you've heard a million times, 'With great power comes great responsibility.' He's just a very responsible guy. One thing that scares people about getting married is the responsibility, and that's something that Peter embraces. He takes responsibility about as far as *anyone* can. And he has known Mary Jane for umpteen years."

Yes, the old red and blue costume will be back permanently. No, we're not going to tell you why.

Spider-Man ART: Trademark & Copyright 1992 Marvel Entertainment Group

He's back from the dead and ready to party! But with an insane asylum and a horde of old enemies waiting for him, don't expect Spidey to have a good time.

Web Art: Mike Zeck/Bob McLeod

Having Mary Jane around permanently is, though, only the first step in getting Peter Parker's life in order, something that Salicrup feels is long overdue.

"The major changes with Peter haven't been for the good," he comments. "He was feeling more and more the burden of being Spider-Man until he hated it. The way he made a living was to go out and take pictures of himself as Spider-Man, and then he was just eking out enough money to survive in New York rent and prices. There was very little good ever happening to him, just all the bad aspects of being Spider-Man constantly on top of him. It was really a rather miserable life.

"So, we're going to make Peter's life better," Salicrup admits. "One thing that made sense was to marry Mary Jane. There are many other things that he'll be thinking about: where they're going to live, what he's going to do. Part of that is a decision to go back to school and pursue becoming a real scientist. Now that he's able to accept being Spider-Man, we're hoping that he'll be able to create a Peter Parker that he can be happy with, also."

At the same time, Mary Jane will be trying to reshape her own life. Having long escaped her problems by retreating into a more carefree, fun-loving persona,

"As far as the world knows," Salicrup notes, "it's just some photographer wanting to be a scientist marrying a model."

According to Salicrup, the marriage was "something that has been set up longer than anything else."

she has recently discovered that she is indeed capable of confronting life head-on as herself.

"In a sense, she's still maturing and figuring out who she really is," Salicrup observes. "One aspect of Peter that she also saw in herself was this leading of dual lives. It will be much easier to come to grips with their own lives while they're with someone else. With all that, Mary Jane can't imagine to whom it would be better to be married than Peter Parker."

And while she'll be happily wedded to someone who routinely battles super-criminals, Salicrup stresses that it will be the man behind the mask that Mary Jane is spending the rest of her life with—*not* the costumed adventurer.

"It's not like one superhero marrying another superhero. She's marrying Peter Parker, who happens to be a superhero, and there *is* a difference there. Villains aren't suddenly going to know—the way

Jim Salicrup's waiting for fan reaction to see whether the multi-book stories he favors will become standard Spidey fare.

they do with the Fantastic Four—that here's this guy's wife, there's his son," Salicrup says. "As far as the world knows, it's just some photographer wanting to be a scientist marrying a model."

Consequently, although a major event in Spider-Man's life, the wedding won't make much of a difference to the rest of the Marvel Universe. "Spider-Man's not going to be wearing a wedding ring or giving out cigars to the other characters," Salicrup notes. "As far as the other superheroes are concerned, they have no idea he's married."

After their honeymoon in this year's *Peter Parker Annual*, Peter and Mary Jane return home to confront a nemesis from the past, but also an experiment that may reshape the regular books for the future. In a six-part, two-month long tale crafted by writer Marc DeMatteis, penciller Mike Zeck and inker Bob McLeod, the fearsome feral felon Kraven the Hunter returns with a vengeance. For the first time, a story winds through all three Spider-Man books.

Realizing that the serums he has developed in the jungle have been keeping him alive much longer than anybody has a right to be, Kraven decides to defeat his arch-foe once and for all before his borrowed time runs out. "And he actually *does*," Salicrup continues. "Kraven doesn't really kill Spider-Man, although he could have. Kraven even goes to the extreme of burying him alive."

"After getting Peter Parker married and burying Spidey alive, what else can we do to the man?" Salicrup asks rhetorically. "He winds up in an insane asylum in a three-parter which will also run in all the books, written by Ann Nocenti. Cynthia Martin does the art, very different from anything she has done before, and Steve Leialoha is inking. The asylum that Spider-Man winds up in is maintained by the Kingpin. When there are people the Kingpin doesn't necessarily want to have killed, just put away, that's where they go."

Previously, the three Spider-Man titles had each developed their own separate, though related, storylines, with footnotes explaining just when each adventure *might* fit in with the others. For Salicrup, that destroyed the whole reason for following the hero's escapades.

"What I liked about *The Amazing Spider-Man* was seeing what was happening in his life, and the continuity was very much like a soap opera," he says. "Ever since he has had these spin-off titles, there have been problems with that idea. When you have a story that's self-contained and can take place anywhere in the continuity, what's the point of reading Spider-Man? The fun is wanting to see what happens next, reading the sub-plots.

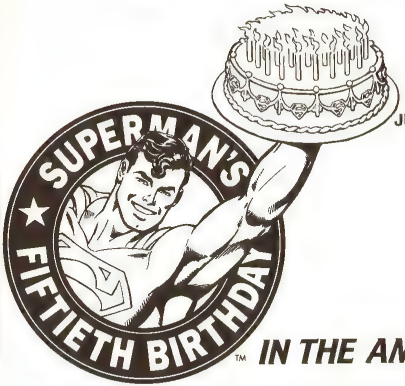
"The reason I want to do these multi-parters is to experiment to see if the audience will accept a three-times-a-month Spider-Man comic, where they pick one up after another and follow it that way. Somehow, that makes more sense to me than trying to make sense of 'Well, this story's a two-parter but takes place in *Amazing* and this story in *Peter Parker* takes place either before or after this other one in *Web*.' I would rather have one line—this is what Peter's life is like as Spider-Man and just follow it that way, than try to break it up all the time."

Whether or not the cross-over multi-parters become the norm depends on how readers respond to the experiment. In the meantime, the different titles will revert to their individual identities. Stan Carter, formerly the Sin-Eater, is released from psychiatric care and Electro returns in a three-part story written by Peter David that will run in *Peter Parker*, soon to be known simply as *The Spectacular Spider-Man*. Jim Owsley then takes over as regular writer on *Spectacular* with Sal Buscema handling the art chores.

Owsley will also become the regular scripter of *Web* with Mike Zeck and Steve Geiger alternating as penciller and Bob McLeod will be the regular inker. Alex Saviuk weaves a David Michelinie tale featuring the return of Dr. Octopus for *Amazing Spider-Man* #296 and 297. Afterwards, Michelinie, the new permanent writer for *Amazing* with Todd McFarlane pencilling, then starts a storyline that will build to the 300th issue, involving the wall-crawler's oddest, yet deadliest, enemy and a return to the original red-and-blue costume.

Heading back to school, being thrown into a psychiatric institution, and having to battle a resurgence of old foes—even as a set of new ones are waiting on the sidelines—might be more than enough for any superhero to handle. But as Jim Salicrup points out, how bad can it be when he has Mary Jane to come home to afterwards?

"Peter has been typecast as being the guy with a million problems," he comments. "This might be the one thing in his life that actually works out perfectly. It may surprise him." ■



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Stan Lee
It's a Marvelous Life

While toiling at Marvel Productions, "The Man" remembers some of his world's greatest heroes and plans New World projects to come.

Stan Lee gets a lift to Spidey's Shea Stadium wedding from some friends.

Photo: Jim McLennen

By CLIFFORD METH & DANIEL DICKHOLTZ

Amazing Fantasy #15 Art: Jack Kirby-Steve Ditko

Jack Kirby's muscular, "glamorous" Spider-Man never made it past the web-slinger's first cover appearance.

To his family, friends and the industry he helped to launch, he is a hero. But to the millions of fans who read Marvel Comics, Stan Lee is better known as a hero maker. Most of Marvel's characters—The Fantastic Four, Spider-Man, Silver Surfer, The Avengers, Iron Man, Hulk, The X-Men—sprang from Lee's fertile imagination in collaboration with legendary artistic talents Jack Kirby and Steve Ditko.

Credited as the guy who "humanized" superheroes, Lee joined Marvel (then Timely Comics) as a 16-year-old writer in 1939. Throughout the '40s and '50s, he was like any other writer, cranking out scads of formula stories for titles like Combat Kelly, Millie the Model and Ziggy Pig. He finally bucked the system in 1960 and began writing comic books his own way. Developing scores of characters and breathing new life into old favorites—such as Captain America and the Sub-Mariner—Lee carefully wove stories and characters together soap-opera style into what is today known as "The Marvel Universe."

Rising to Marvel's helm as publisher in 1972, today, Lee heads Hollywood's Marvel Productions, one of the nation's largest animated production facilities.

COMICS SCENE: Marvel presents an alternative universe where heroes really exist Do you think that's an important contribution?

STAN LEE: Yes. Everybody needs heroes. Everybody should have somebody to look up to, somebody to aspire to be like. In my case, I read legends, Robin Hood, *The Odyssey*, Sherlock Holmes. I saw Errol Flynn movies, and I wanted to be Errol Flynn. Every time I left the theater, I had a crooked little smile on my face and I swashbuckled down the street. Until I was 10 years old, I wished I had a sword at my side. I would rather have been Errol Flynn or Sir Arthur Conan Doyle or Sherlock Holmes or Tarzan or Edgar Rice Burroughs or H.G. Wells. All of these people were my heroes. I assume that everybody's like that. We all have people we admire, actors we admire, fictional characters we admire, and if we didn't, what would we ever have to aim for? What goals would we have?

CS: Do you still have heroes?

Strip Art: Flair Dery/Copyright 1987 Marvel Entertainment Group, Inc.

FOR ONCE I WASN'T NEEDED!
THANK YOU, LORD. THANK YOU!
I NOW PRONOUNCE YOU MAN AND WIFE!
YOU MAY KISS TH
THEY'RE WAY AHEAD OF YOU!
NEXT: HOME IS THE HERO!

Peter and Mary Jane have finally tied the knot. A match made in heaven? Nope, just a logical move by Lee.

LEE: Sure. Steven Spielberg, George Lucas, Woody Allen, Kurt Vonnegut, Gregory McDonald, who writes Fletch. I go through life having heroes.

CS: At their best, what do comic books accomplish?

LEE: Well, I've only thought about them from one point-of-view and that is entertainment. That's their primary function: to entertain.

CS: But certainly, when you were addressing such issues as the drug problem in the '60s, you were making at least an attempt at social commentary.

LEE: You're absolutely right. But, the first objective is to entertain. Then, what happens is when you're writing a story, you cannot—at least I cannot—divorce yourself from the world around you. You're writing a story to entertain, but while you're writing it, you're aware of the problems of terrorism, of poverty, of crime. While you write, you can't help putting your own philosophy into the stories.

Whatever I thought of, I used to write. I always thought what I was doing was good. I've always considered myself one of the good guys, one of the guys wearing a white hat. So, I never worried. I always tried not to use my own personal opinions to influence kids about things that were *purely* my own opinion. I never tried to discuss politics or religion.

CS: In *The X-Men*, there's an anti-mutant fear growing amongst the populace. It seems to be a brilliant way of depicting the world's prejudice.

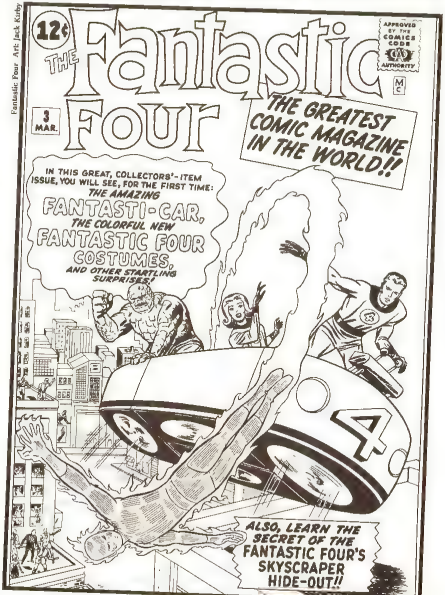
LEE: This was the basis of the original book. One of my biggest problems, when I tried to create characters years ago, was trying to find an excuse for them to wear masks and have secret identities. I used to think, if I were a superhero, I would want *everyone* to know. Why would I want to conceal my identity? So, I had to come up with excuses. With *The X-Men*, the excuse I came up with was people fear things that are different. They distrust superior people. Certainly, the X-Men were so superior that they realized that the only way they could live safely in our society was to keep their powers and identities unknown. I believe I established that in the first story, and it worked. Chris Claremont has carried it many steps further, but it's still the same theory.

CS: Most Marvel heroes are people with problems. Was that just a sales angle?

LEE: Not at all! I had been writing dull stories for years because I was the ultimate company man. I did what my publisher wanted because I felt that's the way it should be—you work for somebody, you do what he says. For 20 years, I was grinding out the type of stories he wanted and I won't apologize for them. They were good for what they were. These were Westerns: Kid Colt, the Rawhide Kid, the Texas Kid, the Ringo Kid, Apache Kid—he loved the name "kid." We did war stories: *Battle Grady, Combat Kelly, Battlefield, Battleground*, on and on. We did romance books: *My Love, Your Love, His Love, True Romance, Your Romance, My Romance*, anything. We were real mass producers. I wrote virtually all of them.

I always wanted to quit because, while I was making a living, I felt I wasn't getting anywhere. I told my wife, "Honey, I want to try writing other stuff. I'm going to give this up." She said, "Stan, you've been

Fantastic Four Art: Jack Kirby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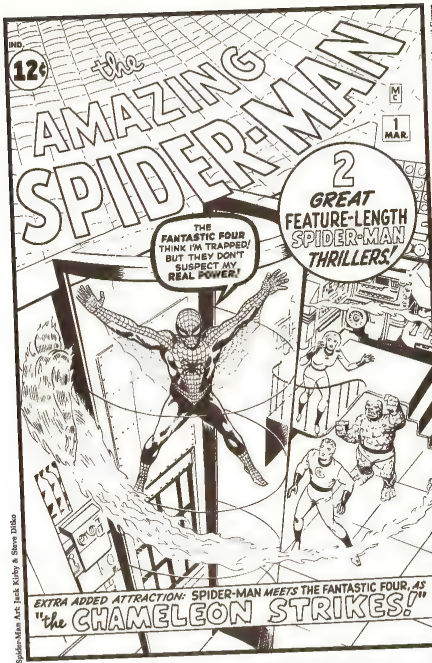
Even though they had to wear costumes, Lee made sure the Fantastic Four was a different sort of super-team.



Spider-Man Art: Jack Kirby & Steve Ditko

frustrated for years because you never really wrote the kind of stories you wanted. Before you leave, why don't you just take some books and write them your way? What's the big deal? You want to leave anyway, so what'll they do, fire you?"

I started with the *Fantastic Four*. We didn't have any superheroes then. We were doing monster stories. My publisher said to me, "You know, I've been looking at sales figures and DC Comics' *Justice League of America* is selling very well. We should do a few superheroes and put them together." I said, "Fine." But I wasn't going to do it the former way.

CS: Which was?

LEE: Bland. They all fight together, love each other. Typical group. I figured I would make one a monster, another the hero's fiancee, the third, her kid brother who's a little bit of an itch.

I tried to do it the way I thought superheroes should be in real life. I even tried to be different by not giving them costumes, but that was a mistake. The one thing superhero readers won't tolerate is a hero without a costume. I got a lot of mail after the first issue: "Love your book! It's wonderful! Best thing I ever read! Congratulations! But if you don't give them costumes, I'll never buy another issue." So, I don't have to be hit on the head. We put costumes on them. Everything else worked. I never thought it would sell well. I figured I'm getting it out of my system, and then I'm going to quit. Well, it was the bestselling book we had in years. So, we brought out *The Avengers*, *Spider-Man*, *The Hulk*.

CS: Jack Kirby did almost all of them with you, except for *Spider-Man*, which was Ditko's.

LEE: I gave Kirby *Spider-Man* first. I told Jack I had this character I wanted to do, I described Spider-Man, and I said, "You know, Jack, what I want you to do for once—don't draw him the way you draw all these characters," because Jack drew the most handsome, heroic, glamorous heroes you'll ever find. I wanted Spider-Man to be just an ordinary guy—a little bit of a nebbish, no broad shoulders, glasses. And Jack brought in a page or two of Spider-Man and he sure as hell didn't hear me, because the character looked like Captain America in a Spider-Man suit. I said, "Look, Jack, forget it. You have enough work." Then, I asked Steve Ditko to do it. To this day, I don't know who made up the Spider-Man costume. It might have been Kirby who did those first few pages and Ditko might have copied Kirby's costume. Or Ditko might have just made up the costume and disregarded what Kirby did. I can't remember.

CS: You used to do a phenomenal amount of work with Jack Kirby [who was involved with Marvel in a dispute over the return of his original artwork].

LEE: We were partners on most everything.

CS: Friends, too?

LEE: I don't think we're as friendly, now. He isn't as friendly toward me as I wish he were. I'm not really 100% sure that I know what the reason is. Maybe he feels he's not as well known or he feels that I've achieved a little more something than he has. I don't know. He has never told me. Jack is certainly one of the most talented if not the most talented guy that the comic book industry has ever produc-

Characters crossing over into each other's adventures lent reality to the young Marvel Universe.

Positive fan reaction brought about the creation of the Avengers and the return of Captain America.

Avengers #4 Art: Jack Kirby

ed. He is the most imaginative, the most creative guy I have ever known in this business. His mind is an endless source of stories, concepts and ideas. He was a fantastic artist with one of the most powerful, dramatic styles you could ever find. I've always said that, I've always felt that about him, and I still do.

CS: Other than Kirby and Ditko, who were some of the real-life heroes of Marvel's past?

LEE: One guy who I miss tremendously wasn't an official artist, Sol Brodsky. He was my assistant for years and the company's production head. He could write, he could draw, he could ink—he could do everything. But he worked in production. And boy, that was a loss for them. Of course, there was Carl Burgos who did the Human Torch and Bill Everett who did the Sub-Mariner. I admired them so much when I first got into the business.

CS: Who are your favorite Marvel characters?

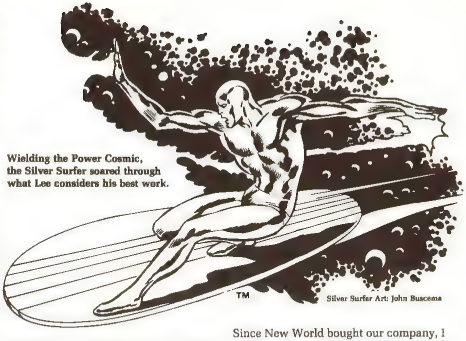
LEE: Maybe Spider-Man and the Silver Surfer. I got more philosophy into the Silver Surfer than anything I ever wrote. He was always giving his opinions about life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness. I liked him because he was so offbeat. I think those 17 issues of *The Silver Surfer* that I wrote and John Buscema drew are the best 17 comics that have ever been done. They're classics.

CS: You're still writing Spider-Man in his daily newspaper strip and it was your idea to marry him off. How did all that come about?

LEE: Well, I found out that in the comic books, Mary Jane Watson knew Spider-Man's real identity was Peter Parker. It was a surprise to me. So, I arranged to have Mary Jane learn Spider-Man's identity in the newspaper strip, so that the comic and the strip wouldn't be too different from each other. Then, I figured, now that she knows who he is and they're both in love, it would seem to me the logical thing is for him to propose. And I dreamed up what I thought was this funny reason for her not to accept; she said eventually they would want to have children and she couldn't bear the thought of a child who might crawl on walls. One thing led to another and Peter took a blood test to find out if his spider-power might be hereditary. Finally, she agreed to marry him. And I was at a convention with [then Marvel Editor-in-Chief] Jim Shooter, talking to the people in the audience, and I mentioned that I planned to have Peter and MJ get married. I turned to Jim and said, "Hey! Wouldn't it be something if you did the same in the comic books?" Jim said, "That's a great idea."

CS: What will happen in the comic strip after the honeymoon?

LEE: In the strip, there isn't even going to be a honeymoon! It's so impossible for us to do the same stories because, as you can imagine, the comic strip runs two or three panels a day, one day at a time. The comic book stories are about 20 pages monthly in each of three different books, there's no way we can work it out. So, I just go my way with my stories and Marvel Comics goes their way with theirs. I don't have Peter and Mary Jane take a honeymoon at all. They decide to live at Peter's apartment. And then Peter is concerned because Mary Jane's working and he isn't. The first plotline that I have is Peter deciding to become a professional wrestler, and that's what I'm writing at the moment. I'm not quite sure where I go from there. I never really know how the stories will end until I start writing them.



Wielding the Power Cosmic, the Silver Surfer soared through what Lee considers his best work.

Silver Surfer Art: John Buscema

CS: In the strip's early continuity, Spider-Man was fighting Dr. Doom and Dr. Octopus, but as time went on, there seemed to be fewer super-villains on hand. Why?

LEE: That was intentional. It was a very carefully considered decision. I realized that the newspaper readership is quite different—mostly adults, many women—and I felt the best way to go with *Spider-Man* was to treat it like a soap opera, like *Mary Worth*. The only difference being it's a soap opera about a young grad student who has a superpower. Given the fact that he wears a costume occasionally, climbs on walls and swings on a web, I try to keep everything else as realistic as I can. For Spider-Man in the newspapers, I think that's the best formula.

CS: What exactly does your position at Marvel Productions entail?

LEE: I wish I knew (laughs). It is so open-ended. I do so many things. I guess I'm the head of development at the studio; I work with my assistant, Tony Pastor, in developing new ideas for shows and videocassettes. I'm also involved in trying to keep our live-action motion picture projects on track, in setting those projects up, and in making sure that they're being done the correct way. Similarly, I have the same function on our TV projects. Since New World bought our company, I work very closely with their movie and TV executives on all Marvel projects.

CS: Cannon Films still seems to be trying to get the *Spider-Man* and *Captain America* movies going. What's their current status?

LEE: Well, Cannon is still trying to come up with the right scripts. New World would like to buy those back from Cannon and produce them themselves, and at the moment, I don't really know where they stand.

CS: What other characters is New World

(continued on page 64)

The original X-Men gave Stan Lee a soapbox to sound off on bigotry.

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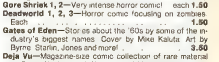

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The Spirit Art Copyright 1936, 1937, 1974, 1983 Will Eisner

The Spirit HELD HOSTAGE

Bound but determined to break free, Will Eisner's heroic crimefighter battles on—though not on television.

By EDWARD GROSS & STEVE SWIRES

Will Eisner's *The Spirit* has run into a variety of nefarious forces over the decades, but none can compare with ABC. The network commissioned a TV movie pilot based on the property (from Warner Bros. TV) but then decided not to air it, much less order a regular *Spirit* series for the 1986-87 season. And so *The Spirit*, starring Sam J. (*Flash Gordon*) Jones, sits on a shelf—a project held hostage.

"*The Spirit* got caught between the old management at ABC and the new," explains Steven de Souza, who scripted the TV movie and served as supervising producer. "It was developed and produced for the old owners of ABC. Capital Cities came in, we showed them the print and they turned to us and said, 'Is this supposed to be funny, or what?' They didn't get it. What they put on the air instead was *Sledge Hammer* (created by former STARLOG writer Alan Spencer). They were looking for something funny with action."

Eisner's character has almost made it to the screen several times—once as a TV movie to be directed by William (*The Exorcist*) Friedkin from a Harlan Ellison script. But it was producer Paul (*Sheena*) Aratow who pursued the property for more than a decade and finally landed it. "*The Spirit* had been tied up for a long time," Aratow explains. "It had been optioned by (*Star Wars* producer) Gary Kurtz. He announced his intention to pick up the option, and then ran into financial problems. I happened to call Will Eisner one day, and he said, 'This is amazing. Kurtz' option expired *today*.' I said, 'Don't do a thing.' I went to Warner Bros. with the Kitchen Sink comic book reprints, and had them interested within four days. Will was a very stand-up guy about it, because a couple of weeks later, he told me he was approached by another producer, and Will told him the material was already taken. That producer was Steven Spielberg. I said, 'This will never happen to me again.'"

As the project got underway, Warner Bros. TV selected screenwriter de Souza, then under studio contract, to script the TV movie pilot. And ABC network execs chose the leading man, Sam J. Jones. "Casting decisions frequently depend upon who is writing the check," says Aratow. "In this case, it was ABC's money. We read several actors, but they wanted Sam. I wasn't so certain that he was the correct choice, but as it turned out, he acquitted himself rather well. Sam was much better as The Spirit than he was as Flash Gordon."

Network execs had some other less satisfying ideas. They didn't want the story to take place in the 1940s, nor were they fond of the Spirit's sidekick.

"First of all," explains de Souza, "they didn't want the movie to be period, but we did it anyway, with wardrobe, locations and things that were totally noncontemporary. We avoided showing cars, because cars destroy that never-never land quality.

"Secondly, the ABC censors said the Spirit's sidekick can't be black. We said, 'Batman had Robin, the Human Torch had Toro, Green Arrow had Speedy.' They said that these sidekicks are always white, and I asked what the difference was. They replied that it (a black subordinate) was a negative stereotype. Those are the kind of problems we had."

P'Gell's pernicious plot to plunder priceless artwork may never reach the airwaves.

Spirit TV Photo: Copyright 1988 Warner Bros. TV

Former Flash Gordon Sam J. Jones starred as The Spirit in the doomed TV movie pilot.

The 73-minute pilot movie, eventually budgeted at $2.5 million and filmed on a 21-day shooting schedule, was directed by Michael Shultz. Frank von Zerneck and Stu Samuels served as executive producers. The cast also included Nana Victor (as Ellen Dolan), Garry (*Quincy*) Walberg (Commissioner Dolan), Bumper Robinson (Eubie) and Les (*Harry O*) Lammon (Officer Kling).

The TV movie had virtually no creative input from the character's legendary creator, Will Eisner. "The production went forward so quickly, that there was no time for Will's input," Aratow explains. "He read the script and made some suggestions, but he was living in Florida and wasn't on the set. There were also some matters yet to be settled in the rights contract between Will and Warner Bros. When we started shooting, the rights *still* hadn't been completely cleared. Consequently, Will wasn't around, which was too bad. I even wanted him to play a small part.

"We did send Will a videotape of the completed movie. He was not wildly enthusiastic. He had certain expectations, and felt that many changes had been made in the transition from the comic strip to the screen. He wasn't utterly delighted about that. And he had a mixed reaction when the pilot wasn't picked up for a series. It would have exposed his character to a mass audience, which would have been wonderful, but done in a way he was not pleased with dramatically."

According to Aratow, *The Spirit* aired on European TV to good ratings. De Souza cites the positive reviews, reporting that critics who've seen the film have liked it, with one noting that "*The Spirit* is a wonderful combination of the slapstick and the gruesome, the absurd and the profane, the sexually suggestive and wide-eyed innocence."

"That's what the show had," de Souza announces proudly. "It's like *Batman* for grown-ups. It has the torture scenes. He gets into a fight and his clothes are ripped to shreds. One thing about the Spirit is that he really got abused. When he got into a fight, you knew it. We've got it all, including beautiful women in various states of undress. This is a very *accurate* translation of the strip."

For the benefit of Spirit fans, Aratow reveals the TV movie's storyline: "A local museum is having an exhibition. Through a series of events, it's discovered that many of the paintings and statues are fakes. Everyone thinks the museum curator is the culprit, but it actually turns out to be P'Gell. A patron of the museum, she's using her position to replace the real art works with fakes, and then smuggle the real ones out of the country. Ellen Dolan works for the mayor's office, and is planning a benefit at the museum. The Spirit becomes involved because of Ellen. P'Gell takes one look at him, and says, 'I want to take *him* along as my biggest trophy of all!'"

De Souza, a Spirit fan himself, is confident that the TV movie will eventually make it to the screen.

"Every one of us involved with the film is very proud of what we achieved," he says, "and there's no doubt in my mind that ABC will air it. It'll probably be during the Superbowl or in the middle of the summer."

Although the Jones incarnation of *The Spirit* doesn't have a ghost of a chance of becoming a series, Aratow hopes to try again. He wants to produce another version of *The Spirit*. "Warner Bros. purchased the rights, and has them in a hold back situation," Aratow explains. "There are restrictions on various aspects of the rights. For the past year, I have been attempting to shake some of those rights loose, to redevelop *The Spirit* as an animated feature. Whether I succeed or not is up to Warner Bros. If they want to, they can continue to sit on it for another four years. They can take the stubborn position: 'We don't want *The Spirit*, but we don't want anyone else to have it, either.' We shall see what happens." ■

Dark Knights, Gotham City

Editor Denny O'Neil candidly considers recent Robin revisions, Bruce Wayne's love life & the movie script that finally does Batman right.

By CARR D'ANGELO

Why is Batman willing to risk Jason Todd's life every night, but not Dick Grayson's? And if Grayson got "fired" as Robin, then where did he get the experience—not to mention the inspiration—to continue crime-fighting as Nightwing? And when did the Penny Plunderers trophy in the Batcave become "a giant replica of Two-Face's coin"?

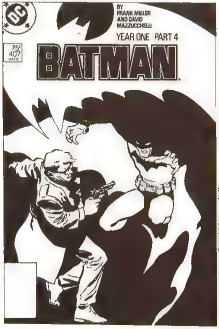
Don't waste your breath pointing out these glitches to *Batman* and *Detective* editor Denny O'Neil. He already knows. "I am aware of the anomalies which have cropped up, particularly in regard to the two Robins," O'Neil admits. "I'm *not* comfortable with that situation and I am working to resolve it.

"There have been many problems," he explains. "One was getting our legs under us after *Crisis on Infinite Earths*, and then me getting my legs under me returning to DC after so many years. I didn't know all the continuity problems at first. I am not obsessed with continuity. That may be an unpopular stand to take, but continuity is a storytelling tool. It is definitely the tail and not the dog.

"I don't wish to be cavalier about this; it's simply that there were problems we couldn't anticipate. All we can do is attempt to solve them as we go along, while not forgetting our primary mission which is to solve them entertainingly. I don't believe in writing stories to fill some continuity gap. There are some people who do, but I'm not one of them."

O'Neil has initiated discussions between himself, new Batman scribe Jim Starlin and DC editor/continuity cop

"The Batman we keep coming back to," says O'Neil, "is the classic. He moves through a dark, foreboding and Gothic world."



Batman #407 Cover, David Mazzucchelli

Robert Greenberger to sort out the Boy Wonders' respective biographies. "We will do a story to clear all these questions up once and for all so that we can all be comfortable," O'Neil comments. "Let's have it all straightened out in our heads and in the readers' heads and get on to other things.

"We've explained why Dick Grayson didn't work out, but maybe not as emphatically as we should. Batman felt the kid was messing up and was going to get killed. He said, 'I'm not going to put you in danger anymore.' Grayson said, 'To hell with you, I can do this. I'll go prove it by being another superhero out there some place.' Clearly, he went and became Nightwing."

According to O'Neil, Dick Grayson adopted his Nightwing identity immediately after being dismissed by Batman, who has been active "for five to six years," he says. "Jason Todd will have been Robin for a few months at that point. I figure Grayson was Robin at about year three. For all practical purposes, the stories we're working on now are present time. Jason Todd is in 1987. In 1987, Jason steals the tires off the Batmobile. And Batman decides, 'This kid is going to end up dead or in prison by the time he's 20 anyhow, I might as well see what I can do with him.' He also likes the kid, he feels a kind of chemistry.

"And thank God for people like Jason Todd, because without him and Alfred, Bruce Wayne would be sort of a monster. They're a very humanizing influence."

Under O'Neil's editorial direction, Frank Miller and David Mazzuchelli produced "Batman: Year One," the excellent mini-series within a series that re-established the Dark Knight's origin. The series exposed the gritty side of Gotham City and emphasized the Batman's shadowy roots, elements which O'Neil says are at the core of the hero's popularity.

"There have really been five Batmans and they've all been right for their times," O'Neil suggests. "But the one we keep coming back to and seems the most valid is the classic, the Batman that Bill Finger and Bob Kane created in 1939, the guy who is obsessed, who moves through a dark, foreboding and Gothic world, who is absolutely and perfectly relentless.

"Everything gets sublimated to his need to deal with the trauma he experienced at age seven. The yin to the yang of his parents' murder, what now keeps him from becoming the criminals he's after, was concern for the victim—in that case, himself. Batman has a tremendous empathy and a bone-deep abhorrence of killing, of the loss of any human life. He is not a Dirty Harry vigilante who believes in solving a crime by blowing away anybody who might be a criminal. Batman's obsession has two facets and one balances the other."

Like his obsessions, the hero himself is split between two sides. After all, the Batman is actually socialite millionaire Bruce Wayne who disguises himself in a costume to combat the forces of crime. Or is it the other way around?

"That's a disagreement I've had with one of my writers who felt that Bruce Wayne was real and Batman was the disguise," O'Neil remarks. "I think Bruce Wayne died at the same time his parents did and at that moment, Batman was born. Bruce is just another tool, he enables Batman to enter places easily that he couldn't normally, and therefore learns things he might find useful. Batman plays Bruce Wayne as a character who is considered harmless by the people of Gotham, someone not focused and ashamed that he doesn't have it all together. Still, he's invited to rich men's gatherings where he listens and picks up pieces for this mosaic he's constantly building of everything going on in Gotham City that might have a crime involved somewhere.

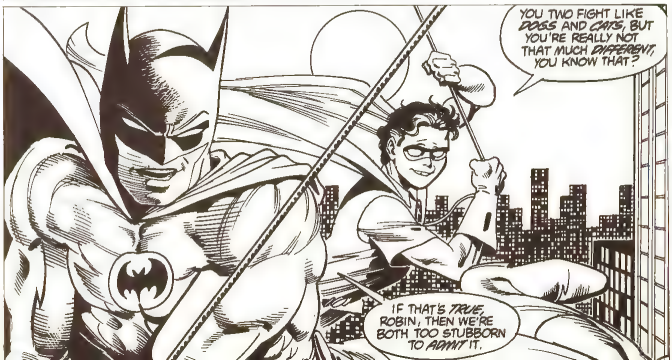
"I also disagree with many people, including DC's publisher Jenette Kahn, about Bruce's love life. I feel he doesn't have any. I think there are a dozen women in Gotham City who got kissed good night on the cheek at 11:00 p.m., but they aren't going to be the ones to say Bruce Wayne cut out on them. And an hour later, he was beating up a jewel thief. Batman sublimates everything, *everything* to his twin obsessions."

As an editor, O'Neil explains that it is not his practice to impose his way of doing Batman on the creative people he hires. Instead, he just asks the creators to stay within a certain Batman ballpark. "The character that you write who wears that costume must be somewhere between here and there," says O'Neil, marking imaginary boundaries with his hands. "Batman is always about 50 percent style, and the style almost always comes from the artist. I encourage my people to give me a dark, somber, *film noir* world.

"Also, we had better have elements of grotesquerie and heightened melodrama. That seems to me to be what Batman is about. Therefore, the Joker is a nearly perfect villain. He's awful and very grotesque. And yet, the best writers have made me believe that such a person could exist."

A recent addition to O'Neil's list of best Batman writers is Sam Hamm, a name currently unfamiliar to both comic book readers and the world at large. Hamm is the screenwriter who penned the latest draft of *Batman: The Movie*, the long-delayed project that finally seems determined to start production this fall. "If

Jason Todd, the new Boy Wonder, has a humanizing effect on the Gotham Guardian.


YOU TWO FIGHT LIKE DOGS AND CATS, BUT YOU'RE REALLY NOT THAT MUCH DIFFERENT, YOU KNOW THAT?
IF THAT'S TRUE, ROBIN, THEN WE'RE BOTH TOO STUBBORN TO ADMIT IT.

Art: Norm Breyfogle

Art: Jim Aparo

Former Bat-artist Jim Aparo returns to the Darknight Detective's adventures.

Sam Hamm ever wants to write Batman comic books, he should give me a call," offers O'Neil. "All the previous scripts and treatments I read missed the mark to varying degrees, but if they shoot this latest script and bring it off, I will be more than satisfied. Parts of it are so well done that he almost makes me believe there could be a Batman and a Joker. He has really thought it all out. From the opening pre-credits sequence to the end, it is everything I want in the Batman of the comics. He is believable, he is obsessed, he's unstoppable. He is genuinely tough and scary."

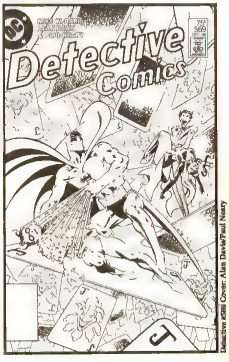
The biggest challenge for the filmmakers, in O'Neil's view, is making the Caped Crusader's costume work on screen. "It's going to be a hell of a time for the art director," he comments. "Batman is a realistic character who wears a costume that nobody could really make work in real life—particularly the cape. They are doing miraculous things in movies in these post-Steven Spielberg days, and many of the modern fantasy movies have a comic book sensibility. It won't be easy, but it *should* be possible.

"The other problem they'll have is the same one we have—competing against that damn '60s TV show. For most people out there in the world, that's Batman, the *only* Batman they know. It's a problem for the comic books because Batman has, since the late '60s, early '70s, been DC's most adult, realistic character, grittier and tougher than anything else we do. And yet, the public's perception comes from the TV show and the Saturday morning cartoons which are very, very different. They present a Batman we have no desire to do in the comics, one our audience wouldn't accept.

"The movie people are going to have that problem times two. The Adam West show [see page 74] is still being rerun and the Saturday morning stuff is always in syndication. Many people will come to the theater expecting that and they're going to get Sam Hamm's script about this obsessed, dark, brooding figure of the night. That's the kind of script it is. That's obviously not Adam West with his silly looking mask and plastic cape."

One major change in Hamm's script from previous drafts is the introduction of Vicki Vale as the romantic interest. "They dropped Silver St. Cloud," O'Neil sighs gratefully. "I can see Batman falling in love; I can't see him falling in love with an airhead. In this script, Vicki is a competent, very together career woman, someone I could accept Batman being attracted to romantically. I have reservations about Batman falling in love at all, but I understand the film producers' need for a romantic interest and I don't quarrel with it. And if you gotta do it, then let it

Combining grotesquerie and heightened melodrama, the Joker is O'Neil's idea of the perfect Batman nemesis.



Detective #359 Cover: Alan Davis/Paul Mayer

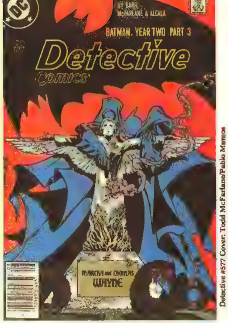
be with someone who is, if not Batman's equal, then at least in his league."

In addition to his staff editing chores, O'Neil is also the writer of *The Question*. Like the Batman, the Question is a masked vigilante in a dark, ugly, shadowed world. Says O'Neil, that's where the similarities end. "Their obsessions are very different," he explains. "The Question has got to know. He's not all that interested in catching criminals or solving crimes. There will be occasions where the Question will let the criminal go. He's not particularly beholden to society's or anybody's idea of justice. Catching criminals and solving crimes is not paramount on his list. It's knowing; he can't stand not to know.

"This may be unique in comic book heroes, but the Question is in the process of evolving. Batman is what he is, he's realized. When Thomas and Martha Wayne were snuffed, Batman was already there—he just needed time to grow into the role. The Question started out as a very not nice man. We dropped hints throughout that he was a rat-bastard and he still has many of those rat-bastard characteristics. The difference is he knows it now. He's working on it to some degree, and he's evolving—but I'm not sure into what."

It is possible that one of the Question's investigations will result in a run-in with the Batman. "I'm mulling that over right now," O'Neil reveals. "I'm thinking about what would happen if the Question got on to a trail that led him to discover something rotten in the Wayne Foundation and he felt he would have to do something about it. That could conceivably bring him into a head-on thing with Batman. My hesitation comes from the fact that I don't want to compete with any of my own writers. That's one of the reasons I have avoided writing Batman."

Planning for the Batman's future,



Detective #577 Cover: Todd McFarlane/Publio Marmora

Bruce Wayne died the same night his parents, were murdered, says O'Neil, and in that moment, the Batman was born.

Did Batman visit Vic Sage or didn't he? Not even O'Neil knows for sure, commenting, "One thing about *The Question* is that we don't always answer the questions. Often, we're content just to pose them."

YOU'RE A FOOL...AN ARROGANT, INCOMPETENT DILETTANTE. THE ONLY REASON YOU'RE BREATHING IS THAT YOUR OBSCENELY WEALTHY PARENTS WERE MURDERED.
YOU BLUNDERED INTO DANGER WITH NO TRAINING, NO PLANNING, NO CONCEPT TO KEEP YOUR EGO AND GIVE YOURSELF A FEW MACHO THRILLS.
NOW, WAIT A MINUTE...
SHUT UP!
DON'T YOU REALIZE HOW VALUABLE YOU ARE TO SOCIETY? HOW VALUABLE ANY LIFE IS? HOW DARE YOU RISK IT?
I WAS FIGHTING CORRUPTION.
YOU WERE GETTING KICKS PRETENDING TO FIGHT CORRUPTION, WHEN YOU FELT LIKE IT. WHEN YOU NEEDED SOMETHING YOUR CAREER NEEDED A LITTLE BOOST.
YOU CAN'T HOLE UP WHAT YOU WERE DOING. IT'S GOT TO BE FULL-OUT—FOUR-WEEK, FIVE-WEEK VACATION. PLUS SOMETHING THAT SCARES YOU.
IT'S NOT TO BE WHO YOU ARE.
LOOK, THERE MAY BE SOME TRUTH IN WHAT YOU SAY.
WHAT?
Batman & Question Art: Denys Cowan
Batman & Question Art: Copyright 1987 & Trademark DC Comics Inc.

O'Neil has been busy gathering the talent to produce the next year or so's worth of *Batman* and *Detective* tales. A series of upcoming stories in Batman will be written by Jim Starlin and drawn by Batveteran Jim Aparo. After a three-month sabbatical from the pages of *Detective* (with fill-in stories by the British writing team of John Wagner and Alan Grant), Mike Barr will return for a minimum of six issues.

"It has taken me a while to beat the bushes, but I am reasonably certain now that I have a list of people who will serve the cause of Batman well. I had made some fairly drastic bad guesses," he admits, "but they all looked like the best possible choices at the time. Unfortunately, there's only one way to find out, and that's to try it. You sometimes publish a magazine that you're not happy with because you had to publish something that month and there was no time to get another issue done.

"One of the mistakes I made—and boy, was that a gold-plated mistake—was hiring a guy who I sort of talked into it, and then he bombed out utterly. I hope I never make a guess that bad again. I'm not going to talk people into it anymore. If I don't get enthusiasm when I approach someone, that's OK, we'll work together on another project. Of the three doozy mistakes I made, that was the biggest."

Though a new movie and an upcoming anniversary celebration have marked 1987-88 as the year of Superman, the editor assures Bat-fans that the Dark Knight is due his day. "One thing I would like to tell the world is that we're still in the process of getting our act together," Denny O'Neil concludes. "It has taken a while but I'm pretty happy with stories and plots that are bubbling around. It's coming together now, and I am confident that by the time of Batman's 50th anniversary, everything will be in place." ■

Flintstones ™ & Copyright © 1991 Hanna-Barbera Productions Inc.

THE FLINTSTONES Go Hollyrock

The Flintstones are making the transition from animated TV series to live-action feature film, and Hollyrock will never be the same.

Producer Joel Silver and screenwriter Steven de Souza, whose individual and collaborative efforts have resulted in such hits as *48 HRS* and *Commando*, and this year's *Predator* and *The Running Man*, both starring Arnold Schwarzenegger, are doing their best to make the continuing *Flintstones* phenomenon a celebration that fans will long remember.

"I love the idea of doing the *Flintstones*," explains Steven de Souza, "because I've maimed and killed all these people in the movies and this would be a change of pace. And Joel Silver and I have worked together so well in the past. I know Joel's excited about it. He's one of those guys who has all the memorabilia in his office. He has the Fred Flintstone pencil sharpener, the Wilma this, the Wilma that. I've just finished the script, and we're tentatively talking about shooting it at year's end for next summer."

The casting of *The Flintstones* has been the source of a great many rumors. Insiders have claimed that Robert Redford has expressed interest in playing Fred and that Jack Nicholson wants in as well. There's also talk that Arnold Schwarzenegger is looking for a leopard skin caveman suit.

Producer Joel Silver is having a great time fielding these pretenders to the Flintstone throne. "Nicholson? Redford? Are you *kidding*?" he laughs. "Jim Belushi is set to play Fred. His deal to do the film is essentially closed."

De Souza adds that there have been talks with Rick Moranis about portraying Barney Rubble. "It's not set yet," the writer admits, "but I think he's a likely candidate. Vanna White from *Wheel of Fortune* has been campaigning to play Wilma, with her agent and managers calling the office.

"She has some things that would help. She's cute, she's perky, she has red hair and she's two-dimensional," he laughs. "Really, though, I think they would want a comedienne. This film may also have numerous cameos. *The Flintstones* is so popular that people want to have something to do with it. Remember the old shows where they would have cameos by people like Story Curtis, Cary Granite and Ann-Margrock? I wouldn't be surprised if that happens here as well."

Jim Henson's Creature Shop will bring modern stone-age appliances to movie life.

cartoon series is currently seen on 108 U.S. channels and in 87 countries.

Steven de Souza recalls that a recent *Flintstones* TV special acknowledged that the series owes a great deal to *The Honeymooners*. "I've even been in meetings with Joe Barbera," de Souza notes, "where he would say, 'A typical situation would be that Barney has a good idea and Fred, thinking he's the brains, says, "Listen, Norton." ' So, he crossed the line there."

While *The Flintstones* prepare for production, there's always the threat of competition with the live-action *Jetsons*, which Paramount Pictures has been attempting to launch for several years. Both producer and screenwriter remain undaunted, feeling that any such film

While both Silver and de Souza are keeping the particulars of the storyline undercover for the moment, the screenwriter doesn't mind whetting appetites with a few tantalizing clues.

"We decided we would do something like *Bob & Carol & Ted & Alice*, only we're calling it *Fred & Wilma & Barney & Betty* and it will probably be rated R," de Souza deadpans. He grows silent for a moment, and the question arises as to just how serious he's being. "It's really an inclusive adventure. Barney is like Ozzie in *Ozzie and Harriet*. What did Ozzie do for a living? Nobody knows, it was never stated. But Barney, although very few people are aware of it, was supposed to be a crackpot inventor. It was dealt with in a few episodes, but then they mostly abandoned it and started going bowling or to the Buffalo Lodge. Our situation is that Barney has a good idea for an invention, Fred sees dollar signs and says, 'Let me handle this, kid,' and they get in over their heads in a giant business deal which at first promises to completely modernize Bedrock society, and ultimately threatens to destroy it.

"It's a film in the tradition of *Ghostbusters*, *Back to the Future* and *Gremlins*," de Souza continues, "a fantasy film with a lot of action and adventure. It isn't going to be a simple domestic comedy. It'll have some very spectacular things. Obviously, we're going to have to be very true to the characters because you must be careful about not undermining people's fond memories of the TV show—although I think it was innocent to a degree that wouldn't be wise today. The TV show is rated G and now, if a movie comes out rated G, no one will see it. *The Flintstones* will be PG. When Fred hits himself in the thumb with a hammer, will he say 'damn?' We've actually had *debates* over that matter. That's not to imply that the picture will be risque, but it will reflect current mores."

The film's special effects will be handled by Jim Henson's Henson Associates

There's an avalanche of Hollywood rumors as to who will fill Fred and Barney's bare feet. Well, aren't Warren Beatty and Dustin Hoffman looking for work?

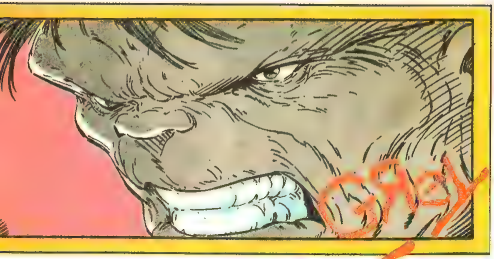
although Dino will "probably" be someone in a suit, with the face articulated off screen. De Souza points out that in Bedrock, your toaster and record player, for example, would most likely be a bird.

"Those things will probably be the more traditional puppets," he explains. "The one thing that I think would be a mistake would be to use real animals. When Wilma takes a shower, an elephant would be the nozzle, but if it's a real elephant, you would fall out of the movie. Everything will have to be built at great difficulty and great expense. I'm trying not to write things that are totally impractical, but that's certainly a challenge."

The Hanna-Barbera-created *Flintstones* recently celebrated its 25th anniversary on television. The syndicated wouldn't be serious competition.

"I don't think the characters in *The Jetsons* have achieved the same pervasive popularity as *The Flintstones*," de Souza observes. "Unlike the Jetsons, the Flintstones are really archetypal characters to whom everybody relates. Fred is a braggart, Barney is a dreamer, and the two women are realists. They're very traditional characters, so people can relate to them. The Jetsons, on the other hand, are more artificial in the way that the *Brady Bunch* family is artificial. Somehow, in a strange way, by attempting to be more real, it doesn't seem to strike the same inner chord with the mass consciousness.

"God," Steven de Souza laughs. "We're getting awfully profound here talking about cartoon characters." ■



Mean, Green Smashing Machine

The Incredible Hulk changes colors & racks up some extra I.Q. points as Peter David returns to the gamma-spawned giant's roots.

By PATRICK DANIEL O'NEILL

We have literally gone back to basics—you don't get much more basic than issue #1 of *The Hulk*," says Peter David, recently installed as regular scripter on Marvel Comics' *The Incredible Hulk*. "In *Hulk* #1, he was grey and had a much more menacing nature than he eventually developed.

Out with the old and in with the even older, as the Hulk pounds his emerald usurper (the gamma-irradiated Rick Jones).

The "higher SAT" Hulk expounds on his own unique viewpoint.

Therefore, I feel the current Hulk is the purest version in ages.

"In the *Origin of Marvel Comics*, Stan Lee says the idea of the Hulk was an atomic-age Frankenstein's Monster," David explains. "My reading of those very early issues is that Stan and Jack Kirby really intended an atomic-age Jekyll-

SO YA HELPED SHIELD CAPTURE ME AND BRING ME HERE TO GAMMA BASE. THAT WAS REAL SMART.
YA DOPES. THINK SHIELD'LL BE GRATEFUL?
THINK AGAIN. YOU WERE A MEANS TO AN END. THEY WANT ME AND BANNER OUT OF

Art: Todd McFarlane

and-Hyde. He changed into a Frankenstein's Monster, but I think it's time to go back and examine the ramifications of that original concept, which hasn't been seen since that first six-issue run in 1962-63."

"Back-to-basics" seems to be a catchphrase on the comics scene today. John Byrne on *Superman*, Frank Miller on *Batman*, and now David on the *Hulk*, have all discussed their concepts, citing that platform. Why is "back-to-basics" such a hot idea?

"Whenever a writer comes on to a comic, the first thing he says is, 'I want to write the kind of stories I enjoyed when I was reading comics.' " David explains. "With the Hulk, it was easy—there were so many stories about the Hulk I didn't like. I just went back to a point where I enjoyed the character. The first issue where I *really* enjoyed the character was *Hulk* #5, the Metal Master story. That was the first incarnation of the Hulk I really liked. The whole air of mystery and menace disappeared with familiarity. That's the key to doing the Hulk now—he's grey, he's mean, he's unfamiliar. The green Hulk was very predictable—you knew he would get mad, he would smash things, and the madder he got, the stronger he got. This Hulk is perfectly articulate and capable of coming up with maneuvers that the previous incarnation *never* would.

"You have no idea how many letters I got on the issue where the Hulk drank a liquor store to put Banner out of commission—people loved that!"

For the first time, a writer has tried to make sense out of the Hulk's initial premise—a radiation accident that creates a monster. David ties it all in with what science now knows about the effects of high-radiation dosages.

"The Hulk is kind of like a cancer," David comments. "Cancer is, by definition, an uncontrolled growth of cells. One of radiation's main side effects is cancer; therefore, I've postulated that gamma radiation has given Banner a kind of mutated form of cancer. What's basically happening is that, when he transforms into the Hulk, his cells multiply at unbelievable speeds, until he reaches the Hulk's mass. Now, what stops the cells from duplicating—how do they reach a cutoff? The answer is they don't—the Hulk is constantly regenerating the cells in his body. It explains his seeming impenetrability; it explains why he doesn't do massive internal damage to himself when he lands after taking those great leaps. In reality, he is—but his internal bodily process and metabolic rate are so accelerated that the damage is healed almost as quickly as it occurs.

"I didn't give it too much thought until I was planning the Hulk-Wolverine battle. How do I prevent Wolverine from using his adamantium claws to cut my main character into Cheez Whiz? Either the Hulk's skin is impenetrable—or adamantium, the strongest substance in the Marvel world, can cut him. In the course of the fight, we'll make the abilities of the Hulk's metabolic processes clear. Wolverine will slam his claws into the Hulk's chest; the Hulk will go down; Wolverine will turn to walk away—and his senses will tell him something his mind says is *not* possible—the Hulk is getting up. The Hulk will smear the blood from his chest—and the wound will be closing up. As the Hulk becomes angrier, he not only gets stronger, his metabolic rate gets faster, he heals faster, he becomes more massive, he becomes more invulnerable."

That makes for a pretty impressive—and unbeatable—character. What kind of villain can David believably create for this version of the Hulk?

"First off, you can put up against the Hulk any villain who can stay out of his way, and attack him from a distance. Why would anyone want to attack the Hulk? Well, some people don't realize he is the Hulk; he acts and looks substantially different. Also, keep in mind, that with a sinister Hulk, you can justify having the heroes of the Marvel Universe come after him because he represents a real threat in their eyes."

In addition, it means that David can introduce some more offbeat menaces. "We'll be introducing a new villainess, an alien called Mercy, who attempts to 'help' people by putting them out of their misery," he reports. "When she finds someone who is miserable enough, but who hasn't got the nerve to take his own life, she kills him—out of kindness."

As Marvel's former manager of direct sales, David is very aware of the business end of comic books—and one of the growing parts of the business is licensing and merchandising. All Marvel's Hulk licensing is based on a *green* monster, but David says the new grey Hulk has yet to cause any repercussions among those in charge of selling Marvel's characters to the outside world.

"Thus far, there has been *no* reaction to my changes from the merchandising and licensing people," he notes. "Licensing of the Hulk is almost an entity unto itself; however, the comic books *do* act as a continuing feeder of the license. Either we may eventually have to change him back to green, or inform the world at large that the Hulk is now grey—and license it that way. It will depend on Marvel's new owners, New World Pictures. If they want to make a movie with the more sinister, grey Hulk, we can keep him grey in the comic because that would become the popular incarnation. What the general public knows now is the TV show of 10 years ago.

"No one ever suggested to me that the color change would be a problem in terms of licensing and merchandising. We're aware of it, certainly—we don't want Marvel to lose potential licensees because of the character's *color*. But we put the main emphasis on the *characters*—we don't publish the characters to support the licenses, it's the other way around."

The Hulk everybody used to know—tough, green, stupid and angry—was, in Peter David's eyes, far too predictable.

Separating himself from any possible licensing confusion, David states his main goal in reverting the Hulk. "The idea is to get people excited about the character again. Because he's grey, because he's tough and mean, everyone is totally inexperienced with this new Hulk—making him an exciting character to discover," Peter David declares. "Everything you thought you knew about the Hulk is incorrect—at least everything about him that was introduced after the first six issues. And we're *not* bringing back the Toad Men." ■

David went back to the very beginning to capture the Jekyll/Hyde essence of the Lee/Kirby Hulk.

Eastman & Laird & Their Pet Turtles

The creators of those Roninistic renaissance reptiles respond to their replicaters.

Photo: Courtesy Eastman & Laird

"Why Turtles?" ponder Peter Laird (left) and Kevin Eastman. Why not? "It could have been anything," they admit.

By WILL MURRAY

When *Kevin Eastman and Peter Laird formed Mirage Studios in 1983, they were comics fans who hoped to make their living doing record album and book covers, and, if they were lucky, a little comics on the side. But the mainstream work never came, and in a whimsical moment, they created the Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles. Originally a parody of Frank Miller's* Ronin *and Marvel's* X-Men*—with a dash of* Cerebus *thrown in—the first issue of the self-published* TMNT *caught the eye of UPI, and the resulting nationwide publicity made Eastman and Laird's quirky creation "hot." Overnight success was followed by a battalion of imitators—*Radioactive Black Belt Hamsters, Geriatric Kung-Fu Gophers, *to name only two—most of which have since faded away. COMICS SCENE asked Eastman and Laird to look back on their Turtles and tribulations.*

COMICS SCENE: Who are you guys, anyway?

PETER LAIRD: Kevin and I are fairly young people who met in Northampton, Massachusetts in 1982 and got together because we share the same interest in art. Careerwise, I was doing spot illustrations at very low pay for various newspapers and magazines and Kevin was working at a lobster restaurant in Ogunquit, Maine.

KEVIN EASTMAN: I've always wanted to do comics.

CS: How did Mirage Studios begin?

LAIRD: Kevin did a painting based on a drawing of mine of a robot. He took it and blew it up and did a full color painting. It was great. We looked at it and said we have to form a studio and work together seriously. We sat down in a pizza shop to figure out the studio's name and settled on Mirage.

CS: What are the Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles?

EASTMAN: The Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles are four turtles who are mutated by a radioactive ooze and trained by another mutated animal—a rat named Splinter—in the art of Ninjutsu, and named after Renaissance artists: Leonardo, Michelangelo, Raphael and Donatello. Splinter gave them these names because he found a book on art history in the sewers. He picked names at random.

LAIRD: They're not like Spider-Man who goes out on patrol every night looking for purse snatchers or murderers. The Turtles are basically trying to survive. They know they can't exist in society as known characters because they're mutant turtles. They would get locked up and dissected, so they stick to the shadows and only interact with normal humans when they must.

CS: How did you create them?

EASTMAN: One night we were working on *Fugitoid* and I did a sketch of a turtle with a mask and sword strapped to his arm and Pete did a modified version of that. It was at that point we thought, if one, why not four? So, I pencilled a drawing of four turtles, all with different weapons and stuff, and I said, "Yeah, we'll call them Ninja Turtles." Pete said something to the effect of, "Why don't we call them Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles?"

CS: Why turtles?

LAIRD: It's one of those goony things. You know, kids like turtles; everybody seems to like turtles. It could have been anything—turtles, guppies.

CS: If the Turtles were naked and carried no weapons, how would you tell them apart?

LAIRD: You would have to know them *real* well.

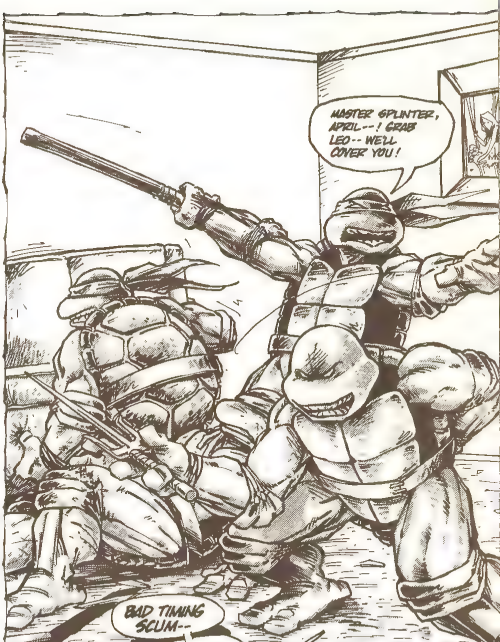
EASTMAN: That's probably the biggest design flaw we didn't think of when we were doing them. We gave them weapons and matched personalities to their weapons. Pete and I each have our own favorite Turtle, but it's something that we didn't even think about: "Good golly, without weapons, they all look the *same*!"

CS: Have you considered modifying the designs?

LAIRD: We have thought about that. In fact, we have done some work on different costume designs, which may or may not show up in the future.

EASTMAN: We love 'em just the way they are right now!

CS: You mentioned each having favorite Turtles. Who are they?

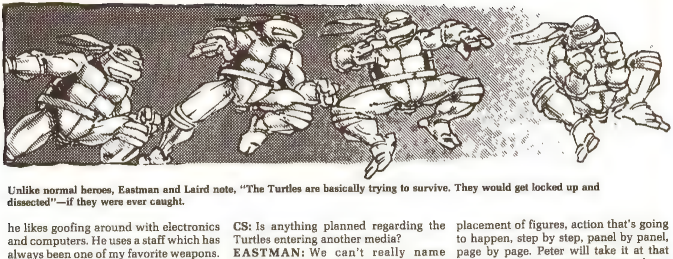


Have trouble telling the Turtles apart? If it wasn't for the weapons, Eastman and Laird wouldn't be able to, either.

EASTMAN: Mine personally are Raphael and Leonardo. Leonardo is the leader. He's sensible, quick thinking, just someone all the other guys turn to in a situation. I like Raphael because he's the one that Leonardo has to spend most of his time trying to control because Raphael is a real nut, a real berserker. He gets into the fighting and causes trouble.

LAIRD: My favorite is Donatello for a couple of reasons. He's into gadgets and

Turtles Art: Copyright 1987 Mirage Studios



Unlike normal heroes, Eastman and Laird note, "The Turtles are basically trying to survive. They would get locked up and dissected"—if they were ever caught.

he likes goofing around with electronics and computers. He uses a staff which has always been one of my favorite weapons.

CS: Is there a downside to your success?

EASTMAN: Funny you should mention that. The major downside at this point is that we're incredibly busy. We have almost no time to deal with friends and family. We're constantly drawing something to do with the Turtles, either our own book or some subsidiary project like Paladium's role playing games.

CS: Do you read the many Turtles parodies that have flooded the market?

EASTMAN: No. In the beginning, I read the first couple, like *Radioactive Black Belt Hamsters*. It was flattering that somebody liked our stuff enough to imitate it. We though it was cute, neat—and then suddenly there are 15 or 20 others. They were thrown together. The Turtles first printing was selling X dollars and other people were out to make a quick buck.

LAIRD: I skim through them, but they're just not very interesting. We would be doing conventions and people would come up to us and say, "You're the guys who started all this." And we would say, "No, pal, we did our own book and everybody else started it all. They're the ones who ripped us off."

CS: What's coming in the near future?

LAIRD: Our big news is that we're leaving New York City. The events that transpire in *Turtles* 10 will force them out of the city. They will be moving to this area, Northampton, Massachusetts. It will allow us to get in regional-interest kind of stuff. That's something that isn't really done in comics very much.

EASTMAN: Yeah, they'll be fighting crime in Northampton and Springfield. We've been out photographing for the last couple of months. We're just finding out now what rights we have as far as using business names and so forth without getting in trouble.

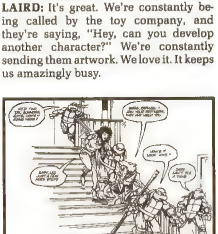
CS: You recently had a Turtles/Cerebus crossover. Are more crossovers in the works?

EASTMAN: There's a possibility of a Flaming Carrot crossover. Bob Burden may be doing a story with the Carrot and the Turtles. It's a matter of nailing down a date. Bob's real busy and we are, too.

CS: Is anything planned regarding the Turtles entering another media?

EASTMAN: We can't really name names because it's hush-hush, but we can tell you that we're working on a large action figure deal, and going along with that an animation deal (with Marvel Productions, which itself anounced the Turtles rights acquisition). If everything goes well, you should see the Turtles on TV this November. It will start as a special.

LAIRD: It's great. We're constantly being called by the toy company, and they're saying, "Hey, can you develop another character?" We're constantly sending them artwork. We love it. It keeps us amazingly busy.



In issue #10, the boys, along with the mutant rat Splinter and their human pal April, escape from New York so they can fight crime in. . . Northampton, MA?

CS: How involved will you be in the TV special?

EASTMAN: We're going to have control over what happens. We're basically going to suggest things, look at the scripts they do, and approve them or not. But we're not going to be doing any of the actual artwork.

CS: You have an unusual collaboration in that you both share the scripting and drawing chores. How do you manage that?

LAIRD: It basically starts off with a story idea. One of us will have the germ and the other one will get in on it and that'll be written up in a rough form. From there, it goes to Kevin's desk.

EASTMAN: I do thumbnails—basically, placement of figures, action that's going to happen, step by step, panel by panel, page by page. Peter will take it at that point and do the scripting. From there, we'll both enlarge in pencil and both ink. We try to get half of us on each page so there's an even mixture.

CS: Your collaboration is so intertwined, does it ever get tricky?

LAIRD: We're lucky in the sense that our styles are similar enough that they mesh without seeming disjointed. Because I work at my house and Kevin usually works at his house, sometimes we won't tell the other guy exactly what we're drawing and then we'll bring the pages together and see that one of us drew something one way and the other guy drew it another. A good example of that is Leonardo has two scabbards for his swords on his back and Kevin was tending to draw the scabbards tucked *into* the belt. We did that for a few issues and it would change from panel to panel.

CS: Can you see yourselves doing the Turtles in 10 years?

LAIRD: I don't know if we'll be doing it in 10 years. I think we may suffer Turtle burnout.

EASTMAN: I gotta agree with Pete. We're having a lot of fun now. As far as we can see, we're not going to be doing anything else but Turtles for probably the next couple of years. But we both have many other ideas and stories that we're dying to do, and it's just a matter of trying to find time to do them. But right now, we're having a blast. They're our characters, we created them, they're fun and we're having fun with them. We still have many stories we would like to tell with the Turtles.

CS: Do you ever wake up at night with a dread feeling that the Turtles will be the *only* thing you're remembered for?

EASTMAN: If it were so, it wouldn't be that bad. It's really neat just where they have taken us, but speaking for me, I don't think you've seen our best stuff yet.

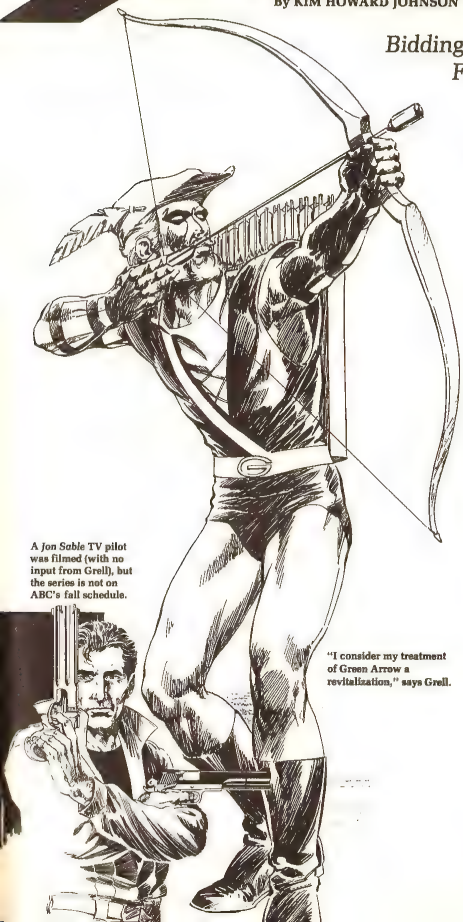
LAIRD: I would prefer that it isn't, but it's not such a bad thing to be remembered for.

EASTMAN: Definitely not. I really love the characters and many other people out there do, too. ■

Along the Straight & Arrow

By KIM HOWARD JOHNSON

Bidding farewell to "Jon Sable, Freelance," writer/artist Mike Grell targets "Green Arrow" for realistic updating in a new monthly series.



A *Jon Sable* TV pilot was filmed (with no input from Grell), but the series is not on ABC's fall schedule.

"I consider my treatment of Green Arrow a revitalization," says Grell.

It may be that the only constant about Mike Grell is change.

After more than 50 issues on *Jon Sable*, Grell is beginning a revitalized *Green Arrow* series in the wake of his three-issue prestige-format series, *The Longbow Hunters*.

"The DC project is keeping me very busy, and there's just not enough time to devote to two projects. I felt that, given the size and scope of *The Longbow Hunters*, it deserved all my attention," says Grell.

"I consider my treatment of Green Arrow a revitalization, not necessarily a revision. I've take the character as he has been accepted through the years, and expanded on that format. His basic history is relatively intact, with a few exceptions I needed to make the whole premise a bit more plausible. Granted, plausibility can be a moot point when we're talking about a guy in a funny green costume with a mask and a bow-and-arrow who runs around a major metropolitan city. In reality, they would drop a net on him the first week!"

Grell says that the greatest change he has made to the character—which will be carried out in the series beginning this fall—is to deal with Oliver Queen's age.

"Rather than make him older than he was before, I'm simply acknowledging the fact that for him to be around as long as he has been, the guy must be in his 40s. I came right out, arbitrarily, and said he's 43—which is not too old, but is still over the hill as far as many readers' perceptions.

"[Veteran DC editor] Julie Schwartz once told me that *none* of DC's characters were over 30 years old. I said that was silly, but he said no, that kids couldn't relate to anyone over 30. I never bought it then, and I *don't* buy it now," Grell explains.

"So, Oliver Queen is older than he has been acknowledged to be. He's 43, and going through a mid-life crisis. He has suddenly come to the realization that most of his life has passed him by, and he hasn't done many of the things that he wanted to

Oliver Queen and Dinah Lance indulge in a bit of nostalgia and romance.

do. His junior sidekick 'Speedy'—Roy Harper—has gone off and sired himself an illegitimate child, so technically, that makes Oliver Queen a grandfather!

"The man has never been married and he doesn't have any kids of his own, so he's getting a strong 'nesting' instinct—and I'm dealing with the reaction of his permanent live-in lady friend—the Black Canary—to the situation. Dinah Lance is none too eager to step back into marriage to begin with, and children are definitely *out* as far as she's concerned. All this serves to make more problems for our hero, and it also serves as a basis for a change in his outlook, and his approach to crime in the streets."

Green Arrow was involved in Frank Miller's *Batman: The Dark Knight*, a vision of one possible future for the DC characters. Grell says even though their versions of the Emerald Archer are not radically different, he was in no way inspired by the Miller series.

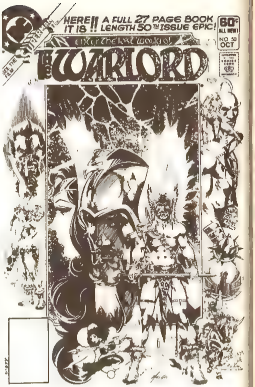
"Frank and I worked on these projects completely and totally separately—with the amazing coincidence that his treatment of Oliver Queen is not inconsistent with the storyline that I'm pursuing. But, my story has *nothing* to do with anything that Miller did. In point of fact, my story was planned many months before *Dark Knight* ever appeared. I don't intend to pursue the story along any particular set of guidelines that somebody else set down. I'm gonna write it the way I want to write it, and the outcome will be the way I want it to come out," he says.

The *Green Arrow* regular series begins shortly after *Longbow Hunters* ends. Grell will be writing the scripts and drawing the covers, while Ed Hannigan is set to pencil. Grell says the ongoing series will have the same direction and realistic tone as *Longbow Hunters*.

"I'm going to continue the stories in the same general vein," he says. "They'll deal with real world subjects as much as I can. I'm combining cocaine traffic, CIA skullduggery, and a story that's loosely based on the Green River Killer, who has been knocking off hookers and strippers in the Seattle area for the last few years. Oliver Queen is based in Seattle, in the real world.

"I've moved him from the mythical Star City because how am I supposed to care about someplace that doesn't really exist? It's not an established legend, like Metropolis or Gotham City. Nobody has ever heard of Star City—the average man on the street has never even heard of Green Arrow! With that in mind, I decided I could do any darned thing I damn well pleased," he laughs. "So, I moved him to Seattle.

"I've also done away with the trick arrows, and I've changed his costume to make him a little leaner. His hair is beginning to fade away, and his temples are higher—he's a little more hawkish in his appearance than he has been before. The stories are aimed at street-level crime as opposed to super-villains—there are *no* super-villains in this piece. Reading the stories carefully, one finds that there is only one place, in the beginning, when he's first describing how he became what he is, where he is even *referred* to as 'Green Arrow.' It's extraneous—it's a *silly* name, and I decided I could live without it. I haven't pointed that fact out to the editors yet, but I'm sure they'll notice. Nobody calls him 'Green Arrow' because it's not necessary if I do the stories right."



The entrance of the Warlord's lost world into DC continuity will be keeping its creator out.

After *The Longbow Hunters*, Mike Grell will continue Green Arrow's adventures in a new regular series.

Photo: Deborah Upton

HMPH! ALL PROUDLY DO THE DEAD!
THE DEAD LOOKUP TO THE HEAVENS AND THE HOLY GOD LOOKS DOWN FROM THE HEAVENS
JESUS LOVES YOU AND SO DOES GOD AND SO DOES THE HOLY GHOST IN THE EARTH
JOAN
ANTICHRIST
Green Arrow Art: Copyright 1987 & Trademark DC Comics Inc.

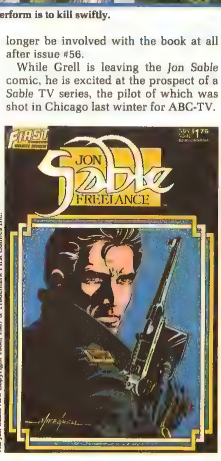
The only trick *The Longbow Hunters'* arrows perform is to kill swiftly.

Grell's lengthy career in comics actually began when he was assisting Dale Messick on the *Brenda Starr* comic strip. He then went on to draw *Green Lantern* and *Superboy* before he created the still-running *Warlord* for DC (which Grell discussed in COMICS SCENE #9). In addition to drawing the *Tarzan* newspaper strip, Grell became one of the first established talents to do a book for Pacific Comics, among the earliest independent publishers.

"When Pacific Comics started out as the flagship of the new independents, Jack Kirby did the first book for them—*Captain Victory*—and I came up with *Starslayer*," Grell recalls. "Even though I had agreed before Jack was signed, he is so much faster that it was easy for him to get a series going much sooner than me!" says Grell.

After six issues, Grell moved *Starslayer* over to First Comics, where he had created *Jon Sable, Freelance* as one of that company's three initial titles. Along the way, he gave up *Warlord*, and after *Starslayer* was cancelled, he devoted his attention to four years of writing and drawing *Sable*. Grell recently decided to give up drawing—but continue writing— the series, but after some disagreements with First, he announced that he would no longer be involved with the book at all after issue #56.

While Grell is leaving the *Jon Sable* comic, he is excited at the prospect of a *Sable* TV series, the pilot of which was shot in Chicago last winter for ABC-TV.



All Jon Sable Comic Art: Mike Grell
All Jon Sable Art: Copyright 1986, 1987 & Trademark First Comics Inc.

"I didn't even hear about it until it was underway—that's how close I am to the project!" he says. "I'm told they kept fairly faithful to the comic, though they moved the setting to Chicago to lower expenses. They're basing their information on the first 24 issues of *Sable*, so the characters have the history established in those books. According to the contract, the characters cannot be changed materially from what they are in the comic book."

Rock star—and comics fan—Gene Simmons of KISS (STARLOG #90) was originally set to play the title role, until he was replaced by Lewis Van Bergen. Grell says he can't argue with that decision.

"I believe Gene Simmons may be single-handedly responsible for the pilot being done—it was his interest in Sable that generated attention. However, I never for one moment thought he was the right actor for the job. My feelings were borne out when ABC looked at the initial footage and decided to replace him.

"I'm going through a combination of emotions somewhere between ecstatic and 'Don't get your hopes up' regarding the pilot. I'll believe it when I see the

Eventually, Grell wants to do the "final" Jon Sable story.

Despite any grim similarities, Grell notes that he wasn't influenced by Frank Miller's *Dark Knight*.

credits roll on the screen. I had difficulties with some of the approaches they were taking, but I understand the production is of pretty high quality—so I'm hopeful."

Grell says parting with his creations is difficult; he has seen *Warlord*, *Starslayer* and now *Sable* leave his hands.

"I have some regrets, but none so much as with *Sable*," admits Grell. "*Warlord* was a relatively simple transition to make because I had so much other work to do that there wasn't even a remote chance of me staying with the book—it was a foregone conclusion that I would have to leave *Warlord*. Other than the covers, I ceased my involvement with the book about two years before my name was taken off; at the time, my wife Sharon was writing the book under my byline."

Even though he's back working regularly at DC, Grell says he has no plans to return to *Warlord* to do more than covers.

"At this point, I will state flatly and categorically—which usually means that my mind will be completely changed in less than a week—there's not a snowball's chance in hell that I will go back to *Warlord*. They've just screwed it up too badly—they have Power Girl flying around and smashing ships in Skartaris."

Grell says he is keeping busy at DC with his current series. And, like his previous titles, he says he has incorporated his own interests into *Green Arrow*.

"Somebody once came up to me and asked, 'Are you Mike Grell? Gee, you don't look anything like the Warlord!' I said, 'I do, I'm just shorter, fatter, balder and uglier!' I'm a conglomerate—there are elements of me in not just the lead characters, but also the supporting characters.

"I have done semi-autobiographical storylines. They're just an adaptation of something I've experienced to add a little more credibility or honesty to the characters. My interests are reflected in the stories I established with Sable—the professional white hunter, and the pentathlon competitor, which gave us a built-in explanation for his athletic prowess and skills with weapons.

"The changes that I made to the origin of Oliver Queen in *Longbow Hunters*, or the origin of his existence as Green Arrow, are based somewhat on my own interests in archery and other knowledge. I also got tired of the semi-silly explanation for why he became what he was."

Despite his commitments to *Green Arrow*, Grell has several projects he would like to do—including a *Jon Sable* graphic novel. "I *still* want to do it, perhaps for release during the next year, but whether it will happen or not is *entirely* up to First Comics.

"It would deal with the end of Jon Sable's career—jumping ahead and telling how the story ends, the way Michael Fleisher did with *Jonah Hex*. I liked the way he took a character who was still running, and jumped ahead to tell a story that otherwise would not likely have been done—nobody does a super-spectacular last issue. When a title is dead, it's generally dead!

"I had intended to do a final story for *Warlord*," says Mike Grell. "I'm really looking forward to doing with *Sable* what I was never able to do with Travis Morgan." ■

"The average man on the street has never even heard of Green Arrow," comments Grell.

WHAT'S WRONG WITH YOU? YOU'RE SUPPOSED TO BE A HERO!
I'M SORRY, MR. QUEEN, BUT I'M NOT A HERO. I'M JUST A GUY WHO'S GOT A JOB TO DO.
I'M A PROFESSIONAL.
I'M A PROFESSIONAL, TOO, AND I'M TELLING YOU, YOU'RE GOING TO GET YOURSELF KILLED.
I'M NOT GOING TO GET KILLED.
I'M NOT GOING TO GET KILLED.
I'M NOT GOING TO GET

A Kid Named Quest™

Artist Doug Wildey recalls his creation's animated origins & announces his last adventure with that world-famous boy hero, "Jonny Quest."

By WILL MURRAY

One of the most welcome revivals of the 1980s has to be *Jonny Quest*. A prime-time animated adventure show which aired for only one season in 1964, *Jonny Quest* was a boy's adventure book come to life. It featured intelligent characterizations, fantastic plots, a stirring jazz theme and, although a ratings disappointment, it has attained cult status among aficionados of TV animation.

Twenty years later, the children who thrilled to *Jonny Quest* are now adults, and the great JQ revival is in full swing. Last year, Comico launched its *Jonny Quest* comic book, written by William Messner-Loebs and drawn, so far, by a battery of talents including Steve Rude, Wendy Pini, Al Williamson, Dan Spiegle and many others. Last fall, Hanna-Barbera aired new *Quest* episodes as part of their *Funtastic World of Hanna-Barbera* syndicated show.

The man who created the series, illustrator Doug Wildey, greets this revival with a certain detached amusement.

"I hate to blow anybody's personal illusions out of the water," he says today, "but I didn't think that *Jonny Quest* was a very good show."

Wildey, now 64, got his start in 1949 and drew Western and other comics through the 1950s. His best-known book work may be his three-year stint on Stan Lee's *Outlaw Kid* and *Rio* (released recently in graphic novel form by Comico). In the early 1960s, Wildey answered an ad which led to his first animation job, working with Alex Toth on *Space Angel*, a syndicated series notorious for an unsettling process called Synchro-Vox, where the lips of live actors were superimposed upon cartoon characters' faces.

Wildey found the switch from comics to TV an easy one, since, he notes, "The animation was nonexistent. It was simply well-drawn still figures. Alex Toth carried about 80 percent of the show with his style."

In a field where artists were rigidly locked into cartoony styles, Wildey found his simple, realistic approach in demand by the early TV animation industry. After *Space Angel*, he walked into the offices of Hanna-Barbera and was instantly hired to develop a show based on radio's boy hero, Jack Armstrong. After designing the characters and producing the pilot, the project fell apart.

"Joe Barbera strolled in and said, 'Create another show for us, then,' " Wildey recalls. "I went home and wrote another one, which was actually a parallel to *Jack Armstrong*. I subsequently came up with *Jonny Quest*. The working title was 'The Saga of Chip Balloo.' Later, I got Quest out of the LA phonebook."

Hanna-Barbera made Wildey supervising art director on the show. Wildey conceived the major characters, did the model sheets and produced the two-minute pilot. Few *Jonny Quest* fans

Jonny Quest: Trademark & Copyright 1964, 1986, 1987 Hanna-Barbera Productions Inc.

Art: Doug Wildey

Wildey updated Jonny, Race Bannon and Hadji for the '80s with a contemporary tale of mid-East terrorism.

realize that Wildey's involvement stopped short of actually animating his creation.

"I was *not* in charge of the animation because I'm not an animator," Wildey affirms. "I would write the story and set the mood, the backgrounds, the characters. I would work mostly on the action part."

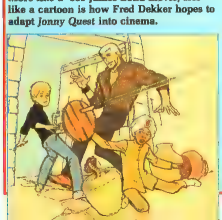
Jonny Quest was a spunky 11-year-old with a mop of blond hair and a signature black turtleneck sweater designed to simplify animating his head movements. His father, Dr. Benton Quest, was a spade-bearded redhead who worked on secret government research. Jonny's bodyguard, Roger "Race" Bannon, cut a striking figure, with white hair and a deep tan. The cast's riotous hair colors were no accident, Wildey points out.

"I still feel that the most important thing in character design is the hairstyle and the color because these are the two

The Cinematic Quest

In a couple of years, when kids go to see *Rocky VIII*, there will be a trailer with it," says Fred Dekker. "And in this trailer, they're going to see a 12-year-old kid, his dog, an Indian boy, people with jetpacks and M-16s, pterodactyls, probe robots from outer space, and secret compounds blowing up in the South American jungle. And they're going to say, 'I'll give my firstborn to see this—what is it?' "

More like a '60s James Bond movie, less like a cartoon is how Fred Dekker hopes to adapt *Jonny Quest* into cinema.



Just from filmmaker Dekker's description, most COMICS SCENE readers will already know—it's Jonny Quest, the classic cartoon adventure from 1964.

But this is no cartoon. It's a *live-action* adventure based on the Hanna-Barbera property, to be written and directed by Dekker for Taft-Barish Productions.

"Many people don't know *Jonny Quest* exists," Dekker says. "There's a whole generation—and I tend not to realize how old I am—that thinks Roger Moore is James Bond. That's the same whole generation that doesn't know who Jonny Quest is. That's who this movie is for."

Of course, the generation who *does* know Jonny Quest may be in for some surprises. Dekker is planning to toughen the characters in ways that wouldn't have been allowed in TV animation.

"I haven't done much work on the script so far, but I *have* made Dr. Quest an alcoholic," Dekker explains. "When his wife died, he didn't take it very well. Now, he goes to AA meetings and he's on the wagon. That's the kind of approach I'm taking.

"Similarly, Race Bannon is a cross between James Bond and Martin Riggs [Mel Gibson's self-destructive supercop in *Lethal Weapon*]. Race was the best operative working in Intelligence One, the government organization that Quest worked for, and the government reassigned him to protect Jonny because Race Bannon is the best. He can kill you with a wadded-up piece of paper at nine yards."

What next? Jonny a junkie? Hadji starving to death on the streets of

For the *Jonny Quest Classics* mini-series, Wildey adapted his "favorite" TV episode, "Shadow of the Condor."

Art: Doug Wildey

things in long shots, or close-ups, or silhouettes, that identify the characters. If you get two people with black hair and they're the same size, you're in trouble."

Wildey had no specific model for Jonny Quest, but says that former child actor Jackie Cooper influenced his characterization. The Dr. Quest look was taken from a character in Leslie Charteris' *Saint* newspaper strip, which Wildey briefly drew. And Race Bannon, the enigmatic spy-turned-bodyguard, was modeled after Western actor Jeff Chandler. "He wasn't the greatest actor in the world," Wildey explains, "but he had this rather striking screen presence."

It was while creating the early cast that Wildey ran into his first creative disagreement on *Jonny Quest*. Someone at Hanna-Barbera suggested adding a bulldog to the cast for toy licensing purposes. Thus was born the irrepressible Bandit.

"I fought against Bandit quite a while," Wildey recalls. "He was a cartoon dog. It was a little bit too unrealistic for the characters. As soon as they put in Bandit, I immediately created Hadji. I felt very strongly that we needed someone besides a dog. It's simply not natural for a kid to talk to grown-ups on the same level."

The final addition to the cast, Hadji was a Hindu boy with undefined mystical power. Although he first appeared in the second episode, the story of how he saved Dr. Quest's life and joined the team wasn't told until episode #7, "Calcutta Adventure." He was mysteriously absent from other segments. Actually, these were pre-Hadji episodes shown out of production sequence.

Hadji was loosely based on '40s film actor Sabu. "Later on," Wildey recalls, Calcutta? Well, maybe. The only character Dekker says definitely *won't* be changed is Jonny's dog, Bandit.

"What's great about Bandit is that he's a *real* dog," Dekker comments. "If the Quest team is in real jeopardy and they're surrounded by the Six with daggers or enemy agents with machine guns or laser rifles, Bandit will see a cat and start barking. Because Bandit doesn't know there's danger. That's what's better about Bandit than, say, Scooby-Doo, who solves crimes and chews gum."

Dekker's plan is not to ape the original cartoon's style so much as to put its characters into a setting reminiscent of another popular series of '60s adventures.

"The classic movie memory for me will always be Sean Connery in a black jumpsuit, planting explosives in a room with an angled circular ceiling," Dekker says. "That's what I want *Jonny Quest* to be—I want it to look like it was made in 1964 and designed by Ken Adam [who designed all the classic Bond films]. I hope Adam does it. And if he doesn't, I'll get someone to rip him off."

In other words, the film may be totally hi-tech, but it's going to be retro-1965 hi-tech.

"Any attempt you make to be futuristic will be dated in a year—unless you're Stanley Kubrick," Dekker explains. "In the '30s, everyone thought the future was going to be art-deco. Art-deco is now dead and hasn't been seen since the '30s—which is too bad, because it's my favorite style. The mistake they made was that because it was the newest thing then, they thought it was going to be the future. This is going to be the 1965 version of that same mistake."

You know the look: chrome walls, silver catwalks, shining monorails, and hundreds of villains in designer jumpsuits all stuck in the middle of a dormant volcano.

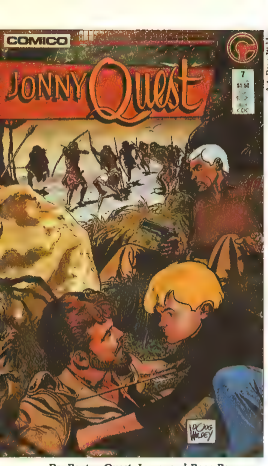
Sounds great? Well, it does to Fred Dekker, too.

"I'm really excited about *Jonny Quest*," says Dekker, who plans to start writing the script shortly. "For me, *Jonny Quest* is the ultimate pulp adventure. I would like to think it'll be something I can be very proud of and say, 'OK, I can die now.' "

But Dekker can't die just yet—the movie probably won't go into production for at least another year, and maybe more.

"I want to get another movie under my belt before I do it," says Dekker, who has directed two features: *Night of the Creeps* and *The Monster Squad* (due out soon). "*Jonny Quest* is a real tall order and it deserves a great deal of care and thought. I want to do it justice."

—William Rabkin



Art: Doug Wildey

Dr. Benton Quest, Jonny and Race Bannon were designed with unique hairstyles, explains Wildey, for easy TV identification.

"when we were auditioning for voices on the series, Sabu's son, Paul Sabu, showed up to audition."

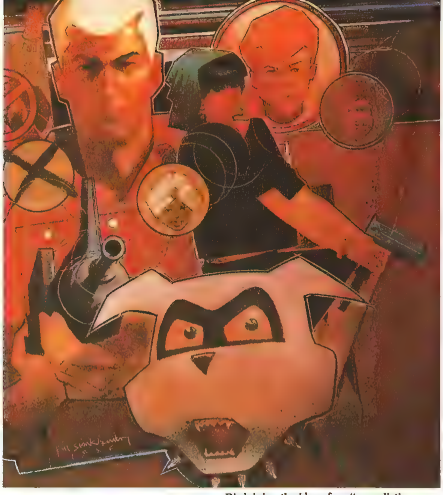
The part actually went to Danny Bravo. Dr. Benton Quest was played by Don Messick (STARLOG #111), who also supplied Bandit's bark. Race's dialogue was spoken by Mike Road. And the voice of Jonny was Tim Matheson, later to achieve adult fame as "Otter" in *Animal House*.

But the real stars of *Jonny Quest* were the stories. Nearly 25 years later, fans still recall certain unforgettable images, like Dr. Zin's giant robot spy, which looked like an eightball until it opened one huge eye, sprouted spiderlike legs and marched on the Quest compound. Or the climactic scene in "The Invisible Monster," when the howling unseen energy being is revealed by dropping paint on it. Mood, even horror, was the hallmark of *Jonny Quest*.

"I really didn't like to scare kids," Wildey says of those elements. "I wanted to give them a little chill. Hundreds of kids have told me they were really scared. I don't feel too good about that."

Working with the actual animators was a challenge. Once, Wildey inadvertently hired two mortal enemies from the 1937 Disney strike and one tried to run over the other in the studio parking lot!

"Animation is basically a lonely job," Wildey remarks. "They're very good at making things move. What they do is they sit there and try to get a rumor started and see if anybody takes the bait. Around the third show, some guy rushed up and told me, 'This is the episode they kill Race. What are you going to do without the character, Doug? You got all these other shows to do.' I said, 'What do you mean, kill Race?' Somebody was putting him on and he took it seriously."



Art: Bill Sienkiewicz

Disdaining the idea of an "unrealistic cartoon dog," Wildey initially resisted the addition of Bandit.

From a Journey to a Quest

Art: Mark Texeira

Watch out for even more of Dr. Zin and his evil machinations, warns Quest comic book writer William Messner-Loebs.

Big changes are in store for Comico's *Jonny Quest*, according to writer William Messner-Loebs. Beginning with issue #14 (on sale now), the series, which has been illustrated by rotating artists since its inception, will settle down to the regular team of Marc Hempel and Mark Wheatley, formerly of First Comics' *Mars* series, who had drawn *Jonny Quest* #3.

Though not a fan of the original show, Messner-Loebs has decided to play up two minor characters from the original series—the mysterious Jezebel Jade from Race Bannon's espionage past and the Eurasian arch-villain, Dr. Zin.

"In talking to my friends who were big *Quest* fans," Messner-Loebs explains, "they all say, 'Oh boy, Jade was in all those episodes and Dr. Zin was behind all those plots.' Actually, each one is only in *two* episodes. But because people are so sure there were more, it seemed logical to carry that through. So, I've built up those two characters."

Reader reaction to Jade and Dr. Zin has been overwhelmingly positive and there are plans to feature them even more prominently. A three-issue Jade mini-series is in the planning stages. As

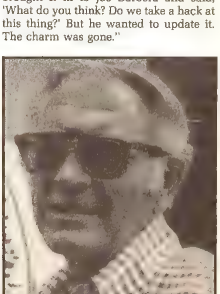
Art: Hanna-Barbera ® Mark Wheatley

Is a decades-old animation rumor finally coming true?

After *Jonny Quest* went off the air, Doug Wildey didn't lack for work. He has been involved in virtually every realistically animated TV show from *Return to the Planet of the Apes* to *Lazer Tag Academy*.

Along the way, he undertook several projects in the *Quest* mold that never went to camera. One, *Tom Swift*, he walked away from when the producers wanted him to update the 1920s boy's books character. More recently, Wildey attempted to revive the classic pulp hero, Doc Savage, as an animated series.

"I hired a young guy named Dave Stevens," Wildey reveals. "Dave and I are still fast friends. At the time, he was a Doc Savage freak. I had never personally read *Doc Savage*. Dave explained who the characters were and what they did. I felt that *Doc Savage* had enough strength and I went ahead and did it in my off hours. I brought it in to Joe Barbera and said, 'What do you think? Do we take a back at this thing?' But he wanted to update it. The charm was gone."



Wildey Photos: Erwin Restemeyer/Courtesy Doug Wildey

Quest creator Doug Wildey expects to soon end his connection with the boy adventurer.

for Dr. Zin, his background will be explored in a trilogy this summer.

"In issue #14, Jonny and Dr. Quest are kidnapped and taken into outer space by Dr. Zin," Messner-Loebs reveals. "Dr. Zin has a huge laboratory orbiting around Earth. One of his space probes is coming back and there's something terribly wrong with it. There may be an alien life form on board and Zin wants Dr. Quest to figure out a way of getting to it without killing it or letting it loose.

"In issue #15, Jonny is sitting around and says, 'Gosh, that Dr. Zin fellow seemed to really know you, Dad.' Dr. Quest says, 'That's true. Actually, we met several years ago when your mom was alive.' And then they go into a flashback episode which is like *Jonny Quest* meets *Hart to Hart*, where we have a very young Dr. and Judy Quest solving a murder mystery in the Arizona desert. It's sort of the origin of Dr. Zin—at least as far as what anybody knows about him. And then, issue #16 will present a rather different view of Dr. Zin than what we've had before."

Further down the line, there will be an issue devoted entirely to Race Bannon. "It's called 'Race Bannon's Last Case,' " Messner-Loebs explains. "It's very much a Raymond Chandler/Sam Spade kind of adventure. Race has to save a young disturbed woman from herself in the black, corrupt bowels of the city. Jonny is listening to the story on Race's tape recorder while wondering if Race has been killed."

Messner-Loebs expects to remain the permanent scripter for as long as the title runs. And he expects *Jonny Quest*, originally planned as a 12-issue series but which will continue at least another dozen issues, will run a long time.

Best known as the creator of Fantagraphics' *Journey* (due to be revived under a new title, *Wardrums*), Messner-Loebs admits to a surprising inspiration for his Jonny Quest stories: Carl Barks' classic Donald Duck comics.

"Sometimes, when I'm working on a particular scene," William Messner-Loebs reveals, "I think, 'How would Carl Barks have handled this?' He had the right amount of explanation and research for a light adventure comic, and yet was able to keep everybody's character in order. That's pretty much what I'm trying to do with *Jonny Quest*."

—*Will Murray*

Stevens, now famous for the *Rocketeer*, modeled his hero's sidekick, Peevy, after Doug Wildey.

Recently trends in using toys in animation have disheartened Doug Wildey. "The toy thing is simply a matter of designing pictures to make the toy look advantageous so they can sell more toys," he explains. "I'm not in the business at the moment because I'm basically a storyteller." When he was offered a supervisory position on Ruby-Spears' *Rambo* recently, he says, "I ran as fast as I could to get away from it."

Then came the *Jonny Quest* revival.

"Comico asked me if I would like to do it. I hadn't done any comics in four or five years. It seemed to me important to kick the thing off right, so it wouldn't get too far away from the characters' original designs. I figured I'd have some fun."

Wildey was pleased to discover that the

(continued on page 64)

Art: Mike Zeck

All Punisher Art: Copyright 1987 & Trademark Marvel Entertainment Group

Crime & Punishment

Chastised by the Punisher & chased by the Flash, writer Mike Baron puts two popular heroes through their paces.

By ANDY MANGELS

What could the Flash, a third-generation superhero, and the Punisher, a semi-psychotic Vietnam veteran, have in common? First, both are springing to new life under the writing skills of Mike Baron. Second, both new series had premiere issues in the top 10 best selling comics. Finally, both are capturing the minds and pocketbooks of comic book fans everywhere.

According to Baron, whose motivation in writing is to provide "fun, entertaining and thought-provoking stories for the reader," the action and the entertainment are only just beginning in both DC's *The Flash* and Marvel's *The Punisher*.

The Punisher, as many fans can attest, is not exactly a wimp. The Vietnam vet, whose family was murdered by the mob, is as likely to be carrying a bazooka and sub-machine gun as most people would a cigarette lighter. Not a stranger to violent characters (consider his *The Badger* for First Comics), Baron views the Punisher as being an obsessively violent man. "The Punisher is not really a fun guy," he notes. "He's the kind of guy that if you saw him walking down the street, you would get out of his way. You wouldn't go up and ask him for directions." Does he have a lighter side? "Yeah," laughs Baron, "we're publishing that as a four-page black & white comic later this year. No, really, he does give a grim chuckle when he kills somebody in a particularly horrible fashion."

The Punisher is "the kind of guy that if you saw him walking down the street, you would get out of his way," says Mike Baron. Gee, wonder why?

Intermixing reality into his storyline, Baron has based issues #4 and #5 on a "Reverend Jim Jones-type character" and his congregation. When the newly rededicated Punisher becomes involved with the weird, charismatic faith healer, he finds himself embroiled in a theological conflict deep in the jungle of Guyana.

Returning to New Jersey, the Punisher finds a situation with a huge amount of mayhem, as two rival crime families fight for control of the state waste disposal industry. The story in issues #6 and #7 will find the Punisher knee deep in toxic chemicals, as he must prevent the sale of plutonium to Arab terrorists.

Future issues of *The Punisher* include a team-up with Daredevil, and a special story drawn by Mike Zeck, in which the Punisher goes "down under" on the trail of a vicious Australian killer. "The crossover with *Daredevil*," says Baron, "will be a very gritty and realistic story. The series' main focus is on the action, but I'm not going to shy away from the questions raised by, and the consequences of, those actions. *The Punisher* is not a superhero book, it's straight-ahead action. With few exceptions, there are no super powers, no science-fiction elements and no giant monsters."

Baron is extremely pleased with his col-

Art: Klaus Janson

The Punisher's motto: "If you're guilty, you're dead." Seems fair enough.

laborator on *The Punisher*, artist/colorist Klaus Janson. "Klaus is incredibly sensitive to my stories," the writer comments. "He does an incredible amount of research on the Punisher's hardware, and brings just the right mood and atmosphere to the book. Partially due to Klaus' work, partially due to my writing, and partially due to the character's popularity, *The Punisher* has been and is successful. And of course, that pleases me incredibly."

Cured of a debilitating disease at the end of *Crisis of Infinite Earths*, Wally West, the former Kid Flash, donned the costume and name of his mentor and vowed to continue his fight against crime. The first third-generation hero proved little challenge to write for Baron. "Wally's a lot like me—impatient. He's always sitting on the edge of his chair saying, 'Come on, let's go.' The big difference is that he's 20 and won the New York State Lottery, while my life went along a different path," jokes Baron.

Being 20, Flash tends to have a large amount of youthful enthusiasm, a fact proved by the extravagant lifestyle he now enjoys. He's also a romantic, a facet of his personality that gets him into trouble in upcoming issues. Tina McGee, a female nutritionist who is studying him, is ensnared by his charm and eventually becomes involved in an extramarital affair with him.

Issue #7 concerns Flash's attempts to find a cure for "Speed." McGee, Tina's insanely jealous husband who artificially boosted his own abilities and attacked the Flash. The battle ended when McGee lapsed into a coma, and unfortunately, the only man capable of reversing the effects is a dissident Russian scientist living in internal exile in Siberia. Flash decides to kidnap/rescue the scientist. "At this point, we find out that along with their other super-power projects, the Russians have been developing a team of super-speedsters, named Red Trinity," reveals Baron. Red Trinity consists of two men and a woman who are all almost as fast as the Flash. Each of the characters, although they have exactly the same powers, have different personalities, and thus different ways of using superspeed. Red Trinity will also appear in issue #8 and may be a recurring villain group.

Coming next will be a crossover with DC's major team-up book of the year, *Millenium*. Flash's father, who was reintroduced in issue #5, will begin to play a major role in Wally's life. Tina McGee will also be a fairly regular character in the book and many of the Teen Titans will guest-star. "Flash will probably never tackle many of the other Flash's Rogues Gallery villains. I do like Mirror Master, but unfortunately, he's dead. Vandal Savage will be returning as well, and could be looked upon as the book's main antagonist. You can't keep a good villain down without killing him off, and even sometimes when you do that, they keep popping back up. Vandal Savage *will* be back."

The Flash—fast, furious, and like Baron, impatient.

The Flash, Baron realizes, is the first newsstand comic book to deal overtly with a hero's sexuality. "I'm handling it with maturity, discretion and wit," he says. "There's nothing really objectionable that's going to be in here. I think any kid who is able to watch TV is aware that people have physical relations. We're going to handle it in somewhat the way that primetime television does, only with better taste.

"I'm really having fun with *The Flash*. He has no ultimate goal concerning his future as a superhero. . . yet. He's only 20. Most of us don't know what and who we want to be until we're 29!"

Baron continues to write *Nexus* (STARLOG #119) and *Badger* for First Comics, as well as the adaptation of Michael Moorcock's *Chronicles of Corum* and the just-announced *Badger* graphic novel with Bill Reinhold. He is also adapting *Robotech Masters*, and writing a *Ginger Fox* limited series for Comico. For DC Comics, he will soon be writing a 12-issue maxi-series entitled *Sonic Disrupters*. "I have a number of other secret projects in the works," Baron remarks. "Some of these projects have been written over the years—so I don't want people to think I write seven days a week. I only write *six* days a week."

■

Byrne

(continued from page 9)

water towers on the roof, I immediately started trying to do moody, *Dark Shadows* stuff. I quickly realized that isn't the way my head works, so it's difficult for me to mimic it. I can mimic the look but not the guts. Almost everybody I have ever seen has influenced me in one way or the other."

While continuing to chronicle the Man of Steel's adventures, Byrne is returning to Marvel. He'll write *Star Brand*. And he sees little difference in the creative atmospheres of Marvel and DC.

"Generally speaking—taking the biggest picture—the company I'm working for doesn't affect how I work," he answers. "The characters are what affects me. It doesn't really make that much difference whether it's a character for Marvel or for DC. I try to put myself inside the character's head—and ideally, the characters don't reflect anybody's particular corporate stance."

He admits, however, that the same character published by another company can come off quite differently. "If Superman had been published by Timely in 1938, he might be a different character now, but I don't think he would have been then," he speculates. "If you look back at those early Superman stories, they're every bit as gritty, grimy and nasty as anything that was ever done with Sub-Mariner or the Human Torch—Superman threw people out windows and what-not.

"He would have evolved very differently over the years; obviously, a Superman re-created by Stan Lee and Jack Kirby in 1961 would have been very different. The first thing I can think of is that there would be *no* kryptonite—because Marvel has traditionally gone for internal, as opposed to external, weaknesses. As a whole, I think his beginnings would have been the same."

Byrne doubts that comic readers and historians will look back on his Superman work as they now do the work of his predecessors, including Curt Swan and Wayne Boring. "I would love to have people talk about the Byrne Superman as they do about Swan's or Boring's," he admits. "I don't think it will happen, simply because comics and their audience are very different now. Curt left a wonderful imprint upon the character—and Curt is doing a *Superman* graphic novel, which I'm really looking forward to seeing. Karl Kesel has said he would like to see us become the definitive Superman art team, of the Curt Swan-Murphy Anderson variety. I won't be all bent out of shape if that never happens, if only because of my vast respect for Curt Swan, Wayne Boring and all those who went before. I would feel a little out of place in their company. Now, people will say, 'There's John Byrne being falsely modest, again.' " ■

Lee

(continued from page 37)

interested in developing?

LEE: The X-Men, Dr. Strange, Power Man, the Sub-Mariner and a number of others which I don't think I should mention because they're still too new. We also have the Fantastic Four being done by Neue Constantin, the company which produced *Neverending Story* and *The Name of the Rose*, and *Nick Fury, Agent of S.H.I.E.L.D.* is at Paramount. I would think sooner or later all of our characters will hit the screen. It's only a matter of time before Iron Man and Daredevil do.

CS: Didn't you try your hand at a *Spider-Man* script?

LEE: Not a script. I wrote an outline on which the present movie is based, the one on which Cannon is working. They've given it to a number of different writers. Each new writer has made his own alterations on the outline, but it's based on my original story. In fact, I've also done another original story which New World will produce which isn't a Marvel character but we're going to do a comic book based on it as soon as it gets further along in production.

CS: Is it another superhero?

LEE: Not quite. It's more of a fantasy-adventure movie [*Decathalon 2000*], but it's in the superhero genre although it isn't a typical costumed character. It'll appeal to that type of audience. I hope *[laughs]*.

CS: New World is also thinking about a Thor TV series. Do you know if that will be faithful to the comic book?

LEE: I'm trying to remember. We had a discussion about it. Let me put it this way: It won't violate anything in the comic book. In fact, it's a rather unique and amusing idea. I don't want to say more than that, but the people who like Thor will get a kick out of this project. Basically, virtually *every* one of our characters is in some stage of development.

CS: Do you ever get tired of Hollywood? Do you ever get an urge to go back to writing comic books again?

LEE: I must be honest and admit that I miss comics. I miss the excitement. Mainly, I miss the people; I loved the people with whom I worked. I also miss the fact that in the comic book business, you can get an idea for a book, get together with an artist, do it, and three or four months later, the book is on sale. In the movie business, you can spend *years* before a project reaches the screen, *if it ever does*. However, I'm *not* the least bit tired of Hollywood. I'll never retire. I love what I do. I love the movie and TV business, and I've never had more fun. The only thing that would make my professional life even better would be if Marvel Comics was in the *same* building and I was working on the comics and the movies and the television and the animation all at the same time. That would be heaven. ■

Quest

(continued from page 61)

Quest cast needed no updating. "They managed somehow to still look contemporary," he says. "I kept the same characters and updated the story."

After reintroducing his characters in the first issue's "Sands of Khasa Tahid," Wildey was prevailed upon by Comico to adapt three of his "favorite" original episodes for their recent *Jonny Quest Classics* series.

"They're not particularly favorites," he notes. "I selected the three stories—'Shadow of the Condor,' 'Calcutta Adventure' and 'Werewolf of the Timberland'—only because of the palettes used on three different locales."

Color choice is critical to these books because Wildey colors directly onto his original art, which is then laser-scanned.

Even though *Jonny Quest* is Doug Wildey's brainchild, he doesn't involve himself in the regular comic book series, which is being written by Journey's William Messner-Loebs.

"I've left him strictly alone," Wildey says. "I talked with Loebs once, but I never make any criticisms or contributions to the writing. Loebs' approach is heavily into plotting the series along the lines of science fiction. That's the only way you could go when you get down to it. The stories I'm doing are more direct in the sense of adventure and trying to keep the original show's flavor."

Similarly, Wildey keeps his distance from the new animated episodes. "I've seen one half of one of the new shows," he comments. "It wasn't a world-beater, by any means. It was just another product to be licensed out of a huge studio."

Wildey was approached to work on the new episodes, but never reached an agreement with Hanna-Barbera. Likewise, a few years ago, his idea for a *Young Dr. Quest* series, featuring 22-year-old archeologist Jonny Quest, in Wildey's words, "sank without a trace."

Having successfully relaunched his characters in comics, Wildey isn't planning any future *Jonny Quest* work. "Other than a movie, if I'm lucky enough to get consulted," he says, "this will probably be the end of my participation in *Jonny Quest*."

Is he surprised that *Jonny Quest* has come back so strongly?

"To be honest, no," he observes. "I don't believe since *Jonny Quest* aired in 1964 that a year has gone by without somebody talking about making a movie or another series."

But he is, slowly, reconsidering his opinion of the original *Jonny Quest* run.

"I thought this would be the first pioneer crude attempt at doing a show of this type," Doug Wildey explains. "But it never worked out that way. In retrospect, *Jonny Quest* looks great compared to other shows *now* on the air." ■

The Next Epoch at Epic

Shadow invasions & a robot village; alien legionnaires & a vampire's quest—Archie Goodwin previews the three entries in Marvel's upscale line.

By Gary Berman, Staff Writer

Epic Comics, Marvel's line of higher-priced, more mature-targeted titles, will take on a French flavor and a hi-tech appearance this summer, with the release of material by France's celebrated artist/writer, Moebius, and a computer-generated graphic novel from Michael (*Shatter*) Saenz featuring Iron Man.

"The Moebius work is a series of six graphic novel-sized books," says Epic Editor-in-Chief Archie Goodwin. "It's the most comprehensive collection of his science-fiction and fantasy work ever published in the United States, including a good deal of his French work."

Goodwin notes that many Moebius stories were published by *Heavy Metal* some eight to 10 years ago. "Some of the Epic volumes will repeat that work, but in this series, almost anything that was previously in black-and-white will be in color," he points out. Translations for the Epic edition were prepared by veteran STARLOG writers Jean-Marc and Randy Lofficier.

Michael Saenz's *Iron Man* graphic novel will be a major advance from his work on *Shatter*, according to Goodwin. "It will be *entirely* computer-generated, including the color," Goodwin says. "It's light years ahead of any computer art you've seen before. Mike has found a way to do color for print media with the same kind of almost surreal airbrush quality you see in computer animation. When I first saw computerized art, I thought it was interesting as a novelty, but a come-down from what the artist could do without using the machine. What Mike's doing on the *Iron Man* graphic novel is more than equal to what he could do if he were painting it. It has a unique look that lives up to anyone's standards."

Among Epic's other summer releases will be a new version of its popular title, *Alien Legion*. "This resulted from a fresh look at the entire Epic line," Goodwin reports. "It seemed to me that many of our titles were just regular hand-colored books on better paper. Now, I've tried to divide the line—there will be more expensive Epic comics, selling for $1.95, with fully painted color, camera-separated; then there will be a lower-priced line, $1.25, with hand separations and Mando or better paper.

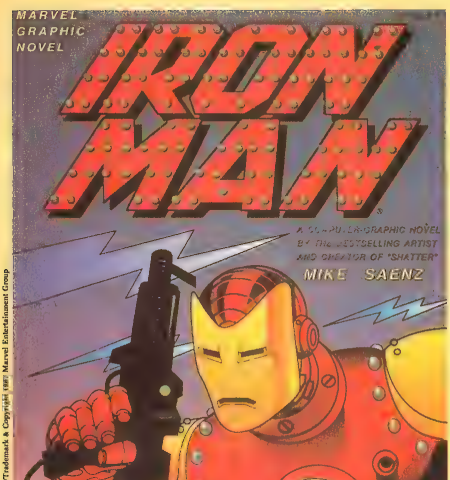
"*Alien Legion* will bring its first phase to a conclusion with issue #20," Goodwin explains. "Then, we'll be putting it in the lower-priced format, with a story that begins two years after the last issue of the first run. It will involve a disaster that has befallen many of the regular characters,

Art: Copyright 1979, 1987 Moebius

Epic's version of Moebius' *The Airtight Garage* will appear in color and with pages never before published.

Alien Legion Art: Larry Stroman/Trademark & Copyright 1987 Carl Potts

Commander Sarigar and his *Alien Legion* will be more of a commando strike squad in their new incarnation.



Iron Man Art: Michael Saenz/Trademark & Copyright 1987 Marvel Entertainment Group

It only seems fitting that Epic's first computer-generated graphic novel stars hi-tech hero Iron Man.

and deal with Commander Sarigar's quitting the Legion to search for his missing Legionnaires, for whom he feels responsible. Gradually, he'll find some of them alive, some are dead, and they'll form a more tightly knit unit, a sort of commando strike squad." The creative team on *Alien Legion* will be unchanged: it is packaged by Carl Potts, written by Alan Zelenetz, pencilled by Larry Stroman and inked by Randy Emberlin.

Another new title from Epic is one that even Goodwin admits is difficult to boil down into a few words, but perhaps *Video Jack*, created by Cary (*Captain Atom*) Bates and Keith (*Ambush Bug*) Giffen, can be thought of as a *Brigadoon* for the 1980s—gone wrong. "The main character, Jack, is a teenager in a small American town—very *It's a Wonderful Life*—but since it's a town in the '80s, the problems of the modern world have encroached upon it," Goodwin says. "It's starting to go to seed. A wizard lives in the town and plans to cast a spell to preserve the community in its more innocent state. The spell involves a satellite dish and other modern technology. Things go wrong when he casts the spell, and the town is reproduced, endlessly, in an infinite number of realities, all based on anything that can come in on that satellite dish. The hero, Video Jack, and the wizard's son—who functions as Jack's friend in real life, but, in alternate realities, as the villain—are the only two people who can move in and out of the alternate worlds."

The British writer and artist team of Pat Mills and Kevin O'Neill have created *Marshal Law*. "It takes place after a natural holocaust—the big earthquake everyone has been expecting in California—has finally happened," Goodwin notes. "In addition, this is a future world where, at some point, Central America became a war zone, and someone in the U.S. government got the bright idea of genetically creating 'heroes' to fight in the war zone.

"The story takes place after these genetically hyped-up veterans return. In the rebuilt San Francisco, the heroes have become the equivalent of villains. Their powers, once they no longer have a war to fight, turn them into criminals, maniacs and delinquents. Marshal Law is a vet himself, and the only one of his kind willing to go up against these heroes-turned-villains—he is, in effect, a 'hero-hunter.' "

Marshal Law Art: Kevin O'Neill/Trademark & Copyright 1987 Pat Mills & Kevin O'Neill

When genetically-created heroes turn rogue in this post-apocalyptic future, they'll be sure to fall under *Marshal Law*.

Also due this summer will be *Blood*, a horror-adventure story by J. Marc (*Moonshadow*) DeMatteis and Kent Williams. Like *Moonshadow*, it will be done in full-painted color, and will be published in a format similar to DC Comics' *Dark Knight* series—comic-book sized on high-quality paper and square-bound. "It's about a man on a quest who becomes a vampire, and must live out his life, and his quest, in that state," Goodwin notes.

Lastly, Epic will introduce a trio of inter-related titles this summer: *Dr. Zero*, *Powerline* and *St. George*.

"The common background is that there is a shadow race, evolved parallel to mankind. They're physically and psychologically superior to mankind, but of a much smaller population," Goodwin says. "As time goes on, they're nearing extinction. Now, they're toying with the idea of going public. Dr. Zero, a member of the shadow race, appears to mankind first as a superhero, but becomes a villain. Powerline is a man and woman team who complement each other's psychic powers. Because of Dr. Zero's going public, they do so as well in order to combat him. St. George is a human, an ex-priest, who becomes a vigilante, with

Video Jack Art: Keith Giffen/Trademark & Copyright 1987 Cary Bates & Keith Giffen

When *Video Jack* wants his MTV, he gets more than he bargained for.

weaponry provided by the shadow race."

It is a mark of the change in the comic book industry that Epic remains as a place where the field's top creative talent—including such internationally renowned creators as Moebius—want to publish their best work. Ten years ago, projects such as *Video Jack* or the recently completed *Moonshadow* would have been published in limited printings at exorbitant prices. Today, they are affordable to all comics fans—without the creators even losing control of their visions. ■

Blood Art: Kent Williams/Trademark & Copyright 1987 J.M. DeMatteis & Kent Williams

***Blood* follows a man and his quest to retrieve his soul from vampiric possession.**

Moebius' Epic Strips

The artist/writer Jean Giraud, whose pseudonym is Moebius, is one of the greats of comic art, yet he is virtually unknown to American comic book fans. Until now, all his work has been originally published in France, his native land, with samplings of it appearing (often with varying translations) in *Heavy Metal*. Now, Moebius is living and working in Southern California.

"I am very free, very happy here," he notes. "Once in a while, I feel some longing for my home country. It hasn't affected the content of my work, I don't believe, because I do not put myself in my work that way. If there is any difference, it is entirely unconscious. My work is always timeless, I hope. And not French, or English, or American."

The fifth volume of Moebius' material to be published by Epic will be *The Gardens of Aedena*, appearing simultaneously in America and France.

"*The Gardens of Aedena* is a continuation of work I did two or three years ago, on an assignment from Citroen (the French automobile firm)," Moebius recalls. "They asked me for a few pages. I got an inspiration and gave them 40 pages. They were very surprised, and very happy. It was not quite advertising, but a kind of promotion for Citroen.

"There were two or three allusions to Citroen in the story, but it is very free, really. When I had completed that work, I realized the story wasn't finished. It will eventually be a cycle of stories, perhaps three, four or five books. So, *The Gardens of Aedena* is the second in the series."

Asked if he believes there is an overall theme to his work, Moebius pauses. "Maybe there is," he says. "But I did not do the work with that in mind. After many years, perhaps you can find a link, or a theme, if you like. But it's not my job to speak about that. Maybe the reader can find it, but it's not my concern. Perhaps the only idea in my work is to be free."

—*Patrick Daniel O'Neill*

Epic's translations will make Moebius' European work available to a wider audience.

Art Copyright 1987 Moebius

Cerebus: The First Decade

Creator Dave Sim looks back at 10 years of awesome aardvark adventure.

By WILL MURRAY

Cerebus, the first of the ground-breaking black-and-white alternative comics, marks two special occasions in 1987. After an accelerated twice-a-month publishing schedule, it reaches its 100th issue this summer. *Cerebus* also concludes its first decade with the December issue. Both anniversary issues will be milestones.

"Issue #100 should bring us close to the end of Book Five of 'Church and State,'" according to creator/writer/artist/publisher Dave Sim, who is reticent about revealing other details. "Book Six, 'The Final Ascension,' should be completed by December or January," he adds.

Asked what *Cerebus* readers could look forward to beyond 1987, Sim gives a characteristic reply: "1988."

There are also plans to reprint the first 25 issues of *Cerebus* in a thick anthology package similar to last year's *High Society* collection. Another project, *Church and State Vol. 1*, reprinting issues #52-80, is scheduled for early summer release.

At the time of his previous COMICS SCENE interview (#8-9), Sim was planning to bring the irascible earth-pig to life as an animated TV special, and had just released the first of what would have been several *Cerebus Animated Portfolios* designed to showcase the project. But four years later, *nothing* further has materialized. Will Cerebus hit the small screen one day?

"No," Sim says flatly. "My decision to reserve all rights and decisions for myself precludes moving into the lesser media, like TV and movies."

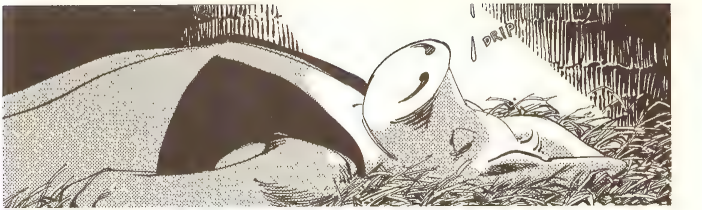
Some Cerebus watchers, pointing to the strong resemblance between Sim's character and the wise-cracking, snout-nosed alien star of NBC's sitcom *ALF*, have suggested that Cerebus has already been beaten to TV by a close impostor.

"Imitation is the sincerest form of flattery," Sim observes. "I am a big fan of the ALF character and don't really see anything legally suspect in what they're doing—though many other people have."

It was in 1977 that Sim and his then-girl friend—now ex-wife—Deni Loubert launched the first issue of *Cerebus the Aardvark* under the Aardvark-Vanaheim imprint. The modest black-and-white was originally a spoof of the Marvel Comics' version of Conan the Barbarian, specifically as drawn by Barry Windsor-Smith. Cerebus, a talking aardvark in a medieval land of humans, has in the past decade shucked off his barbarian lifestyle and become first, Prime Minister of Iest, and is currently Pope Cerebus of Estarcion. Both Cerebus and Dave Sim have grown immeasurably in the last 10 years. In that

Dave Sim has no current plans to introduce Cerebus into any other media.

Photo: Courtesy Dave Sim



***Cerebus* is one book that may have outgrown its audience.**

light, COMICS SCENE posed Sim an interesting question: If the 1987 Dave Sim could go back in time, what advice would he give his inexperienced 1977 self?

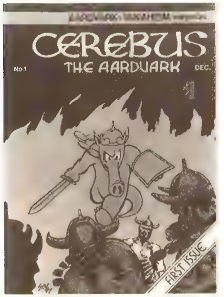
"I would advise myself that the course I was setting out on was inevitably going to cost me in my personal life," Sim says. "I wouldn't *dissuade* myself. I would just point out that the success I was looking for would cost me my current—and all subsequent—loves. It might have made the row easier to hoe, but I doubt it."

In recent months, Sim has been criticized for an apparent change in the direction of Cerebus, specifically in slowing down the time frame and telling the events of *one day* in the life of the earth-pig over the course of *several* issues. The highly politicized plots and more sophisticated storytelling have put off some longtime readers. In comic books, it's common for a title to lose readers when the audience outgrows it. But some critics speculate that *Cerebus* may be the first comic book to reverse that truism, and actually outgrow some of its less sophisticated readers.

"Sure, it's possible," Sim comments. "Very possible. As long as circulation stays steady—or goes up—I'm not about to lose sleep over it."

In recent months, Sim has been very outspoken about creative rights in the comic book field. As a self-published creator, he's insulated from the pressures of editorial influence, but recent developments, such as the well-publicized defections of *Dark Knight*'s Frank Miller and *Watchmen*'s Alan Moore from DC Comics in the wake of DC's controversial decision to implement ratings guidelines, concern him.

"The future of comics depends on what Frank Miller and Alan Moore do next," Dave Sim concludes. "If they self-publish, Thomas Jefferson's dream of Liberty comes true. If they hitch themselves to another corporate wagon—*any* corporate wagon—they're going to lead the next generation of Millers and Moores over the cliff with them. We'll see." ■



With 10 years behind him, Cerebus forges ahead into the future.

The early Aardvark was influenced by Barry Windsor-Smith.

ONE CHOICE ARE WHAT MAKE THE DIFFERENCE. SOMETIMES I WISH SOMETIMES AGAIN, THEY ARE THERE FOR A REASON. SKULKIN' HE FORGETS...
...EXACTLY...
SO CRIMPED THE ECHOES OF PROPERTY... OF LIQUID DISPLACED. REMEMBERING, NO WAY TO KNOW.

COMICS REPORTER

The Comics Screen

In some way or another, these heroes and heroines have been announced as bound for another medium: movie, TV, animation, even Broadway. The characters originated in one of the well-springs of heroic lore: comic books, comic strips, pulp magazines, radio or cartoons. The following list is by no means complete and will be updated in the future. *All* projects are live-action unless otherwise specified.

The Addams Family. Projected TV pilot.

The Adjuster. Comic character in development from Marvel & Columbia Pictures TV.

Alley Oop. Project dead.

Annie. Movie sequel *Annie II*, long in development, scrapped.

Andy Capp. Separate British & American TV pilots in works.

Archie. Two-hour NBC TV movie/series pilot, to air 1987-88. Also, *The New Archies*, animated series from DIC Enterprises & Saban Productions to debut on NBC Saturdays this fall.

Babar. The children's book characters star in *Babar: The Movie*, an animated project from Nelvana, for spring 1989 release.

The Batman. Movie, long in development at Warner Bros. Script by Sam Hamm. Director: Tim Burton. Producers: Michael Uslan & Ben Melnicker, Jon Peters & Peter Guber. Filming may begin this year.

Beetle Bailey. Movie.

Betty Boop. Movie. Pierre Spengler, producer. Richard Fleischer (whose father & uncle, Dave & Max Fleischer, created the character) may direct.

Blade. Movie based on *Tomb of Dracula* character in development at New World Pictures. Script by Lee Goldberg & William Rabkin. To be directed by Tom De Simone.

Blackhawk. Film (see Comics Reporter item).

Brenda Starr, Reporter. Movie starring Brooke Shields & Timothy Dalton completed, seeking distributor.

Captain America. Proposed Cannon Films version apparently dead. Broadway musical in development. Animated half-hour adventures in production.

Cathy. Further animated TV specials may appear on CBS.

Cerebus. Animation plans abandoned (see article).

The Chameleon. New comics character. Joint production between Marvel Productions & Chilmeyer Communications TV.

Conan the Barbarian. Two different *Conan III* script treatments were prepared. Sequel in limbo due to Arnold Schwarzenegger's projects & disappointing box-office returns.

Copperhead: The Legend of Mongrel. Longtime joint project between Marvel & Laurel Entertainment developed by Jim Shooter & director George Romero. Reportedly dead.

Crossfire. TV pilot. ABC.

Daredevil. TV/movie incarnation discussed.

The Law is Dredd

The jury's still out as to exactly when filming *Judge Dredd* begins. "We hope to start next spring or summer," says the movie's co-producer Charles Lippincott, an SF fan who has longed to bring Mega-City One's premier lawman to the screen.

Lippincott, the movie marketing specialist and Lucasfilm veteran who sold *Star Wars* to the American public, acquired the Dredd film rights several years ago. He's now teamed on the venture with producer Edward R. Pressman, whose previous genre projects include *Conan the Barbarian* and *Masters of the Universe*.

Plans for the film, targeted in the $15-20 million budget range, are currently underway. A director is expected to be signed shortly. There is no screenplay as of yet, though comics writer Jan Strnad prepared an early script treatment.

Dredd, in the meantime, is celebrating his 10th anniversary. The feature debuted in the second issue of the British comics weekly *2000 A.D.* in 1977 (see COMICS SCENE #2, 11 for Dredd's history). Created by Pat Mills, John Wagner and Carlos Ezquerra, Dredd is a futuristic hero who serves as cop, judge, jury and (frequently) executioner. His exploits have been illustrated by Mike McMahon, Brian Bolland and Ron Smith.

The producer discounts reports of the involvement of another McMahon—football quarterback Jim McMahon. "He has the build, he looks like the character. That's why he was mentioned. But he hasn't been cast," Lippincott notes.

In the comics, Dredd rarely—if ever—removes his trademark battle helmet. Things may be different on screen. "I am of a mind that you can't make a major film without the helmet coming off," Lippincott says. "There's some controversy about that idea—do we take it off and show Dredd's face or not? We're not certain." And sequels? Lippincott laughs. "First, we'll have to establish Dredd and the judges in a movie," he says. "Then, we'll see."

—*David McDonnell*

Judge Dredd Art: Brian Bolland/Copyright 1982 IPC Magazines Ltd.

Will Judge Dredd remove his helmet for Hollywood?

Strange & Shadow Cinema

Bob Gale is working hard to bring two comic book heroes, Dr. Strange and The Shadow, to life on the big screen.

Gale, who co-wrote (with director Robert Zemeckis) and co-produced *Back to the Future*, is busy toiling on a new draft of the *Dr. Strange* screenplay he wrote a year ago for Kings Road and Marvel Productions.

New World Pictures bought Marvel Productions and, with it, all the projects that the company had in development—including *Dr. Strange*, based on the famed sorcerer supreme created by Stan Lee and Steve Ditko.

"That was good news," says Gale. "It meant *Dr. Strange* might get out of limbo. He's the one character who lends himself without too much difficulty to the existing special FX technology."

New World was also anxious to quickly develop an "A" or "high-budget" picture based on a Marvel comic, and *Dr. Strange* fit the bill.

But New World wasn't entirely happy with Gale's earlier draft. Neither was Gale.

"I met with New World," he says, "and they said we like what basically is going on here, but we think there are a few cliched things. There also might be a few things you would like to change now that a year has gone by."

New World also wanted to concentrate less on Dr. Strange's origins and more on his first adventure. Gale agreed.

"The origin will take up less script than it did the first time around," he reveals. "The inherent story of Dr. Strange remains the same. He is a surgeon only interested in the material world and when that lets him down, he returns to the spiritual. It will *not* be like the tongue-in-cheek silliness they did on TV."

The 1978 CBS TV movie pilot was written, produced and directed by Phil (*Twilight Zone*) DeGuere.

Gale says it's "too soon to tell" who will produce or direct the big-screen *Dr. Strange*. The screenplay will be completed "when it's ready," which he expects will be sometime this summer.

Production will begin this fall on the long-awaited movie version of *The Shadow*, the classic crimefighter created by the late Walter Gibson.

Gale and Zemeckis had originally planned to write the movie together for Zemeckis to direct. Instead, they crafted the story with Howard Franklin, who has written the screenplay for first-time feature director Todd Holland, who cut his teeth on *Amazing Stories*.

Bob Gale and Lou Stroller are the executive producers. On board the project since its inception in 1980, Martin (*Scarface*) Bregman will produce. Zemeckis, busy with Disney's *Who Framed Roger Rabbit?*, is no longer involved.

"Right now, for *The Shadow*, we're trying to find the right locations," says Bob Gale, "and the right Lamont Cranston."

—*Lee Goldberg*

Dr. Strange Art: Paul Smith/Trademark & Copyright 1983, 1987 Marvel Entertainment Group

Bob Gale is weaving the spell that will bring *Dr. Strange* to the screen.

Only The Shadow knows when his movie will get rolling.

Shadow Art: Bill Sienkiewicz/Copyright 1987 DC Comics Inc.

"Tales from the Crypt" to TV

An anthology series based on the classic EC Comic book *Tales from the Crypt* is slithering its way to the small screen.

A three-episode pilot, featuring the talents of directors Richard (*Superman*) Donner and Walter (*Streets of Fire*) Hill, is currently being filmed under the production helm of Joel Silver.

"We're doing it as a continuing series for Home Box Office," offers Silver. "If everything works out with the pilot, it will most likely go into rotation with *The Hitchhiker* series."

Silver refused to give plot info but he did indicate that the stories would be taken directly from the EC comics yarns.

A 1972 film version of *Tales of the Crypt* also featured adaptations of EC stories and starred Peter Cushing, Joan Collins, Ian Hendry and Ralph Richardson. *Crypt*, a box-office hit, was followed by the less-successful *Vault of Horror* in 1973.

—*Marc Shapiro*

DNAgents. Option lapsed on CBS TV movie. Picked up by UA for feature.

Defenders of the Earth. Syndicated animated TV series continues, including the Phantom, Flash Gordon, Mandrake the Magician & their kids.

Dennis the Menace. TV movie to air via syndication soon. Animated series in syndication.

Dick Tracy. Movie. Long in development with various directors and writers at different studios, now at 20th Century Fox. Several different screenplays extant. Still an active project.

Doc Savage. Movie project reportedly in the works.

Dr. Mortalis. New Jack Kirby comics character created for Empire Entertainment movie.

Dr. Strange. Movie. (See CR).

Dominique Shade. New comics character in development for Marvel.

Donald Duck. Donald makes cameo appearances in new animated syndicated TV series, *Duck Tales* (see CR item).

Elektra. Movie. L.M. "Kit" Carson is scripting. Jim McBride will direct.

Elfquest. Movie project in limbo at this time.

Fantastic Four. Movie in

Can Mandrake conjure up a cinematic adventure?

Mandrake Art: Copyright 1979 King Features Syndicate Inc.

Mandrake in the Movies

Dressed in a tuxedo with an opera hat and a black and red cape, the elegant figure of a man stepped onto the stage. He is the epitome of elegance for the 1930s, Mandrake the magician.

In 1934, Lee Falk and artist Phil Davis created Mandrake as a daily comic strip for the King Features Syndicate. Mandrake is a master of hypnotism and illusion who frequently uses his powers to foil the schemes of evildoers. The strip's two most important supporting characters are Mandrake's sidekick, Lothar, the powerfully strong black king of an African tribe, and Princess Narda, the magician's romantic interest.

Though Mandrake has been featured in a 1939 Columbia Pictures serial, two TV series pilots (including a 1979 TV movie) and the animated *Defenders of the Earth* series, a full-length theatrical feature has proven elusive over the years. Screenwriter/novelist William Hjortsberg, who scripted *Legend* and penned the original novel *Falling Angel*, upon which the film *Angel Heart* was based, is the latest to devote his energies to making Mandrake magically appear in the movies. He wrote a screenplay based on Mandrake for Goldcrest Pictures.

"I have long loved Mandrake," says Hjortsberg. "It was one of my favorite comic strips as a kid. In fact, I collect comic strip art now. I have an original Sunday *Mandrake* that Lee Falk signed to me, of which I'm very proud."

Hjortsberg was much closer to the strip's creator than most young fans. "Ironically, I went to grade school with Lee Falk's daughter, Valerie," he notes. "I met him when I was eight or nine at a birthday party. When I met him again, he was in his 80s. I last saw him about a year-and-a-half ago.

"Many people had wanted to do *Mandrake*, including Federico Fellini who had wanted Marcello Mastroianni to star," the writer explains. "Mandrake is much more popular in Europe than he is now in America."

Hjortsberg has set his Mandrake movie adventures in the 1930s with an art deco look which he feels is integral to the magician's character. He has also made some significant changes in Lothar, whose print character he describes as "a big baboon, which I thought was terribly racist." In the script, Mandrake sees Lothar working as a muscleman in a Paris nightclub. The magician realizes that Lothar is in a trance and brings him out of it. Lothar, it turns out, is studying classic literature at Oxford and is fluent in several languages.

The setting may be five decades ago, but the characters will have '80s sensibilities. "I, rather self-consciously, used the Myrna Loy/William Powell relationship in *The Thin Man* as a model," Hjortsberg admits. "It's an action comedy. I read a lot of Noel Coward plays because I wanted snappy patter between Narda and Mandrake.

"Mandrake is not a trickster," Hjortsberg explains. "He is an illusionist and has the power to hypnotize groups of people at once. That's his act. His tricks are hypnotic illusions and there are many of those in my script. That's probably one of the things that has held up getting it filmed. The budget would have to be $20 to $25 million."

The movie's story begins in Tibet at the college of magic where a young Mandrake is being trained. The action moves to Rome, Paris, New York, on the high seas aboard the *Normandy*, the ill-fated liner destroyed by fire in New York Harbor during World War II, and then back to Tibet after a race across Afghanistan.

Like most magicians, the writer doesn't want to reveal too much—of the plot—although he promises that the Mandrake movie will feature an interesting arch-villain theme concerning the Illuminati. Hjortsberg is willing to describe one of Mandrake's tricks. "There's one illusion I actually borrowed from an earlier script with a totally different plot which was written by Lee Falk himself," Hjortsberg says. "During his performance at Carnegie Hall, Mandrake makes the audience think that they're underwater. Everyone is sitting in their seats and suddenly, they're submerged. Hammerhead sharks and angelfish are swimming among the seats and air bubbles are coming out of the audience's mouths."

—*Dan Scapperotti*

Raiders of the Lost Blackhawk?

Blackhawk Art: Howard Chaykin/Trademark & Copyright 1987 DC Comics Inc.

The Blackhawk film project was influenced by Howard Chaykin's version of the character.

Blackhawk, in all its World War II patriotic splendor, has been optioned by producer Joel Silver for a future big-budget film treatment.

Blackhawk, a comic book tradition since the 1940s created by Will Eisner for Quality Comics, was originally under option to Steven Spielberg. Spielberg, however, let the option lapse, thus setting up the Silver acquisition.

"We're definitely going to keep *Blackhawk* as a traditional World War II period piece," says Silver. "But I also see it as being a *Raiders of the Lost Ark* type of action movie."

Howard Chaykin, whose DC Comics graphic novel of *Blackhawk* was instrumental in selling Silver on the project, prepared a treatment, but it reportedly isn't being used.

—*Marc Shapiro*

development with Neue Constantin.

The Far Side. Movie version of the Gary Larson comic panel. To be directed by Alan Rudolph in early 1988. Alive Films production for Columbia release.

Felix the Cat. Animated feature, with animation mostly done in Hungary, due for Thanksgiving release from New World.

The Flash. Movie

The Flintstones. Movie (see article). *The Flintstone Kids* animated series continues on ABC Saturdays.

Garfield. Animated specials continue, including four half-hours & a one-hour show.

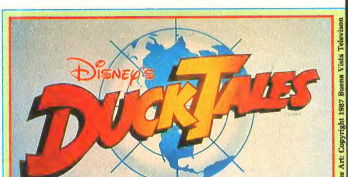
The Greatest American Hero. An animated version of the cancelled TV series in development at Stephen Cannell Entertainment. Sequel TV film dead.

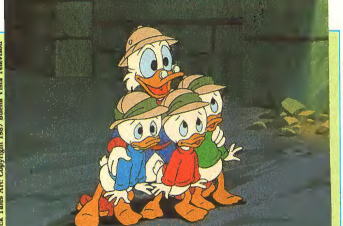
Green Lantern. Rights nearly acquired by 20th Century Fox. Deal fell through.

Heavy Metal. *Heavy Metal's Burning Chrome*, movie based on William Gibson story, in works.

He-Man. Animated syndicated series continues. Live-action movie version, *Masters of the Universe*, now in release.

Howard the Duck. No sequel.





Duck Tales Art Copyright 1987 Buena Vista Television

Scrooge and the boys (Donald's nephews) are slated for adventures in Barks' style.

High Adventure, Duck Style!

Based on the characters originally created by the legendary Carl Barks, *Duck Tales* is Disney's first foray into first-run syndication. Sold as a half-hour strip premiering this fall, *Duck Tales* will consist of 65 Disney animated episodes slated for daily afternoon broadcast.

The new series stars that venerable tightwad Scrooge McDuck, the world's richest duck, and Donald Duck's three nephews, Huey, Dewey and Louie, who have been left in the older McDuck's care. Unlike the comic book adventures, Donald Duck will only be making cameos. The series will focus instead on the exploits of Scrooge McDuck as an experienced explorer, famous adventurer and world-renowned businessduck.

Other Barks characters joining the new animated series are Duckburg's wacky inventor Gyro Gearloose; Gladstone Gander, the luckiest, laziest fowl in the world, who never has to work since anything he wants or needs just falls into his lap; that slinky sorceress Magica de Spell, who has been trying for years to lay her hands on Old Number One (Scrooge's first dime); the Beagle Boys, perennial inhabitants of the Duckburg jail, who spend their time trying to break out of prison and into Scrooge's fabulous money bin; and the penny-squeezing Flintheart Glomgold, the world's second-richest duck, who wants to move up to the top position by any means (nefarious or otherwise).

In Barks' original stories, Donald functioned as an easy-going, lovable, but basically lazy and stubborn foil for Scrooge and the boys. In the animated *Duck Tales*, his role has been usurped by several new characters, which include Launchpad McQuack, a self-considered expert on everything, who sees himself as Steve Canyon incarnate, but is much closer to a gung-ho Dudley Do-Right with Evel Knievel tendencies. Also on hand are Launchpad's adoring admirer Doofus, Mrs. Beakley, the nephews' governess, and Webby, Mrs. Beakley's granddaughter.

The Disney Studios have stressed that *all* creative elements for *Duck Tales*, including story concepts and development, will be done at Disney's California facilities. Ink and paint will be handled at TMS in Japan under the on-site supervision of Disney staffers. Final production will be completed back in California at Disney. And *Duck Tales* doesn't come cheap. Each 30-minute episode is expected to cost the studio $300,000. Estimated price-tag for the entire series is $20 million, an amount that would certainly make Uncle Scrooge blush.

—*David Hutchison*

Many of the tales involving Scrooge and Launchpad center on keeping Scrooge's fabulous riches safe from villains' clutches.

The character of Launchpad McQuack serves as a substitute for Donald Duck, who will only appear as a guest in a few *Duck Tales*.

The Human Target. TV pilot discussed.

Iron Man. Movie versions proposed.

The Jetsons. Movie in development, Paramount. Gary Nardino, producer.

Jonny Quest. Syndicated animated series & movie (see article this issue).

Jon Sable, Freelance. ABC TV pilot for fall '87. New World TV. Stars Lewis Van Bergen.

Judge Dredd. Movie (see CR).

Luke Cage & Iron Fist. Movie in development. Being written by Michael Janover.

Mandrake the Magician. Movie (see CR item).

Mighty Mouse. New CBS Saturday animated series, *The New Adventures of Mighty Mouse*, debuts this fall. Ralph Bakshi, producer.

Mindmaster. New Jack Kirby comics character created for Empire Entertainment movie.

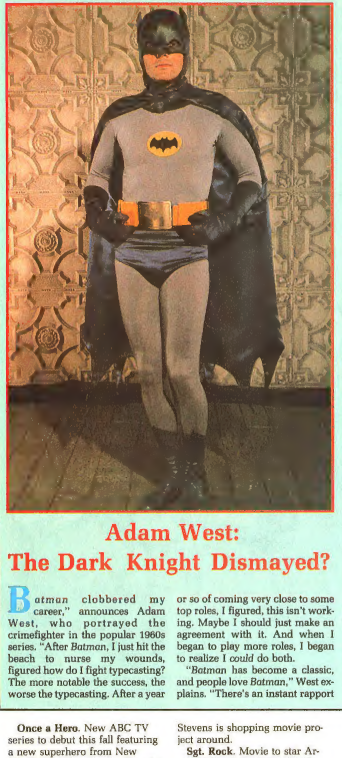
Mr. Magoo. Live-action film in development.

Modesty Blaise. TV pilot deal. ABC. 1986-87. Unsold.

Motley's Crew. Sitcom TV pilot in development.

Nick Fury, Agent of SHIELD. Movie in development with Paramount.

Batman Photos: Copyright 1966, 1967, 1988 2005 Century Fox.



Adam West: The Dark Knight Dismayed?

Batman clobbered my career," announces Adam West, who portrayed the crimefighter in the popular 1960s series. "After *Batman*, I just hit the beach to nurse my wounds, figured how do I fight typecasting? The more notable the success, the worse the typecasting. After a year or so of coming very close to some top roles, I figured, this isn't working. Maybe I should just make an agreement with it. And when I began to play more roles, I began to realize I *could* do both.

"*Batman* has become a classic, and people love *Batman*," West explains. "There's an instant rapport and warmth with people, which is fun. So, it ain't half-bad being Batman from time to time. After all, how many grown men in their deepest hearts wouldn't love to pull on those tights and that cowl and play Batman once in a while?"

Having come to terms with his Bat-Image, West remains interested about continuing to wear the cape and cowl, possibly in the long-in-development *Batman* movie.

"I would love to do Batman, TV movie, theatrical, whatever, to try to do what I feel *should* be done with Batman today," West says, adding, "Since I've heard about the Batman movie project, I haven't talked to anyone about it, nobody has contacted me. But I feel that Batman should involve himself in some great mystery with high technology, and his crimefighting should all be done at night. I also feel that it's necessary to acknowledge your audience and keep some of the same tongue-in-cheek, *Captain Blood* aspects. But *not* campy.

"With today's technology, you could make a superb picture. And I've had 15 years of going out there and keeping Batman alive, talking to the fans, to the audience, and listening to them. When you listen to thousands and thousands of them talking directly about it, you begin to feel that you know what they want to see, and what would arouse them. I don't want to do it if it's going to be a rip-off. Batman meets Godzilla or Lassie. I just refuse to do it. It would be a tasteless, crass denigration of the character, an insult to Batfans."

But West has definite ideas about how his favorite character should be portrayed on screen. "Batman is obsessed," West observes. "He is a multi-faceted person, and this must be brought out more than we did in the TV series. He doesn't have to be handled in a silly manner. He should be treated as a reality-based character, which would appeal to the entire public, rather than just the fan market.

"My Batman film would focus on his beginnings," West explains, detailing what he would do if he starred in the proposed movie, "but would be presented as a flashback. The picture would open with Bruce Wayne today—the hard-driving chief executive officer of Wayne Industries—in retirement as Batman, because Gotham City has been pretty well cleaned up. Then, an event would occur which would be so nefarious that he would be forced to consider coming out of retirement. He would visit the Batcave, see his costume suspended with platinum wires in a lucite box under a spotlight, and remember how it all began. He would be a man who overcomes obstacles, a heroic figure with whom the audience could identify.

"It is difficult for me to walk away from Batman, knowing that someone else might replace me and do a worse job. If that happens, there will be a public backlash, which will translate into lackluster box-office. Without me, the movie won't be the commercial success it could be."

—*William Rabkin & Steve Swires*

"It's difficult for me to walk away from Batman," West admits.

Sgt. Rock Art: Joe Kubert/Copyright 1987 & Trademark DC Comics Inc.

Funny. He doesn't look like Arnold Schwarzenegger.

Once a Hero. New ABC TV series to debut this fall featuring a new superhero from New World TV. Marvel spin-off comic expected. Also known as *True Believers* and *True Colors*.

Peanuts. Animated TV specials continue with four new ones (including a live-action/animation combo).

Popeye. New CBS Saturday animated series, *Popeye & Son*, debuts this fall. From Hanna-Barbera/King Features.

The Protector. New comics character property developed by Marvel & Warner Bros.

Red Sonja. No sequel.

The Rocketeer. Creator Dave Stevens is shopping movie project around.

Sgt. Rock. Movie to star Arnold Schwarzenegger. David Peoples is scripting. Joel Silver, producer.

The Shadow. Movie (see CR).

Sheena. No sequel.

The She-Hulk. Marvel Productions TV project with Viacom.

The Silver Surfer. Long-announced live action movie dead. Animated mini-series in development at New World.

Spider-Man. Cannon Films version apparently scrapped.

The Spirit. TV movie pilot (see article). Unsold.

Sub-Mariner. Movie. Being scripted by Ted Newsome for New World.

Supergirl. No sequel.

Superman. *Superman IV* now in release (see article this issue).

Swamp Thing. TV movie, *Return of the Swamp Thing*, in development for Showtime airing. Michael Uslan & Ben Melniker, producers.

Tales from the Crypt. Cable series (see CR item).

Thor. TV sitcom proposed. Animated series in development.

Tin-Tin. Movie still in development at Amblin Entertainment. Possible title: *Tin-Tin & His Adventures in the Ivory City*.

Watchmen. Movie (see article).

The Wizard of Id. Movie (with songs). Scripted by singer/actor Paul Williams & strip creator Johnny Hart. Due to film soon.

Wolverine. Movie in development. Chris Claremont may script.

The X-Men. TV series pilot in development at New World.

Zippy vision. Movie scripted by Bill Griffith & Diane Noomin, featuring Zippy the Pinhead. ■

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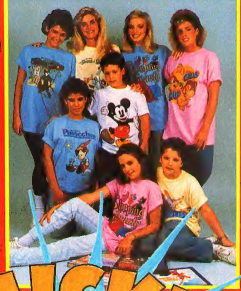

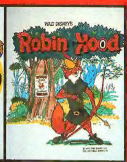

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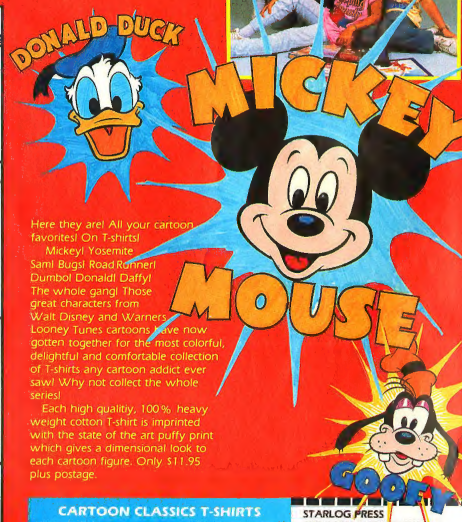

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